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OR,

CATHARINE PARR.

A Historical Novel.

BY L. MÜHLBACH.

From the German,
BY REV H. N. PIERCE, D. D

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HENRY VIII. AND HIS COURT.

CHAPTER I.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

THE great Court festival so long expected was at last to take place to-day. Knights and Lords were preparing for the tournament; poets and scholars for the feast of the poets. For the witty and brave King wished to unite the two in this festival to-day, in order to give the world a rare and great example of a King who could claim all virtue and wisdom as his own; who could be equally great as a hero and as a divine; equally great as a poet and as a philosopher and scholar.

The Knights were to fight for the honor of their ladies; the poets were to sing their songs, and John Heywood to bring out his merry farces. Aye, even the great scholars were to have a part in this festival; for the King had specially, for this, summoned to London from Cambridge, where he was then Professor in the University, his former teacher in the Greek language, the great scholar *Croke*, to whom belonged the merit of having first made the learned world of Germany, as well as of England, again acquainted with the poets of Greece.* He wished to recite with Croke some scenes from Sophocles to his wondering Court; and though, to be sure, there was no one there who understood the Greek tongue, yet all, without doubt, must be enraptured with the wonderful music of the Greek and the amazing erudition of the King.

Preparations were going on everywhere; arrangements were being made; every one was making his toilet, whether it were the toilet of the mind, or of the body.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, made his also; that is to say, he had retired to his cabinet, and was busy filing away at the sonnets, which he expected to recite to-day, and in which he lauded the beauty and the grace of the fair Geraldine.

He had the paper in his hand, and was lying on the velvet ottoman which stood before his writing table.

Had Lady Jane Douglas seen him now, she would have been filled

*Tytler, page 207.

with painful rapture to observe how, with head leaned back on the cushion, his large blue eyes raised dreamily to heaven, he smiled and whispered gentle words.

He was wholly absorbed in sweet reminiscenses; he was thinking of those rapturous, blessed hours, which he a few days before had spent with his Geraldine, and as he thought of them he adored her; and he repeated to her anew in his mind his oath of eternal love and inviolable truth.

His enthusiastic spirit was completely filled with a sweet melancholy; and he felt perfectly intoxicated by the magical happiness afforded him by his Geraldine.

She was his—his at last! After struggles so long and painful; after such bitter renunciation, and such mournful resignation, happiness had at last arisen for him; the never expected had at last become indeed a reality. Catharine loved him. With a sacred oath she had sworn to him that she would one day become his wife; that she would become his wife before God and man.

But when is the day to come on which he may show her to the world as his consort? When will she be at length relieved from the burden of her royal crown? When at length will fall from her those golden chains that bind her to a tyrannical and blood-thirsty husband; to the cruel and arrogant King? When will Catharine at length cease to be Queen, in order to become Lady Surrey?

Strange! As he asked himself this, there ran over him a shudder, and an unaccountable dread fell upon his soul.

It seemed to him as if a voice whispered to him: "Thou wilt never live to see that day! The King, old as he is, will nevertheless live longer than thou! Prepare thyself to die, for death is already at thy door!"

And it was not the first time that he had heard that voice. Often before it had spoken to him, and always with the same words, the same warning. Often it seemed to him in his dreams as if he felt a cutting pain about the neck; and he had seen a scaffold, from which his own head was rolling down.

Henry Howard was superstitious; for he was a poet, and to poets it is given to perceive the mysterious connexion between the visible and the invisible world; to believe that supernatural powers and invisible forms surround man, and either protect him, or else curse him.

There were hours in which he believed in the reality of his dreams; in which he did not doubt of that melancholy and horrible fate which they foretold.

Formerly he had given himself up to it with smiling resignation; but now, since he loved Catharine, since she belonged to him—now he would not die. Now, when life held out to him its most enchanting enjoyments, its intoxicating delights—now he would not leave them—now he dreaded to die. He was, therefore, cautious and prudent; and knowing the King's malicious, savage and jealous character, he had al-

ways been extremely careful to avoid everything that might excite him, that might arouse the royal hyena from his slumbers.

But it seemed to him as though the King bore him and his family a special spite; as though he could never forgive them, that the consort, whom he most loved, and who had the most bitterly wronged him, had sprung from their stock. In the King's every word, and every look, Henry Howard felt and was sensible of this secret resentment of the King; he suspected that Henry was only watching for the favorable moment when he could seize and strangle him.

He was therefore on his guard. For now, when Geraldine loved him his life belonged no longer to himself alone; she loved him; she had a claim on him; his days were, therefore, hallowed in his own eyes.

So he had kept silence under the petty annoyances and vexations of the King. He had taken it even without murmuring, and without demanding satisfaction, when the King had suddenly recalled him from the army that was fighting against France, and of which he was commander in-chief, and in his stead had sent Lord Hertford, Earl of Sudley, to the army which was encamped before Boulogne and Montreuil. He had quietly and without resentment returned to his palace; and since he could no longer be a general and warrior, he became again a scholar and poet. His palace was now again the resort of the scholars and writers of England; and he was always ready, with true princely munificence to assist oppressed and despised talent; to afford the persecuted scholar an asylum in his palace. He it was who saved the learned *Fox* from starvation, and took him into his house, where Horatius Junius and the poet Churchyard, afterwards so celebrated, had both found a home—the former as his physician and the latter as his page.*

Love, the arts and the sciences, caused the wounds that the King had given his ambition, to heal over; and he now felt no more rancor; now he almost thanked the King. For to his recall only did he owe his good fortune; and Henry, who wished to injure him, had given him his sweetest pleasure.

He now smiled as he thought how Henry, who had taken from him the batoon, had, without knowing it, given him in return his own Queen, and had exalted him, when he wished to humble him.

He smiled, and again took in hand the poem in which he wished to celebrate in song, at the Court festival that day, the honor and praise of his lady-love, who no one knew, nor even suspected—the fair Geraldine.

The verses are stiff, muttered he; this language is so poor! It has not the power of expressing all that fulness of adoration and ecstasy which I feel. Petrarch was more fortunate in this respect. His beautiful, flexible language sounds like music, and it is, even just by itself, the harmonious accompaniment of his love. Ah, Petrarch, I envy thee, and yet would not be like thee. For thine was a mournful and bitter-sweet lot. Laura never loved thee; and she was the mother of twelve children, not a single one of whom belonged to thee.

* Nott's Life of the Earl of Surrey.

He laughed with a sense of his own proud success in love, and seized Petrarch's sonnets, which lay near him on the table, to compare his own new sonnet with a similar one of Petrarch's.

He was so absorbed in these meditations, that he had not at all observed that the hanging, which concealed the door behind him, was pushed aside, and a marvellous young woman, resplendent with diamonds and sparkling with jewelry, entered his cabinet.

For an instant she stood still upon the threshold, and with a smile observed the Earl, who was more and more absorbed in his reading.

She was of imposing beauty; her large eyes blazed and glowed like a volcano; her lofty brow seemed in all respects designed to wear a crown. And, indeed, it was a ducal coronet that sparkled on her black hair, which in long ringlets curled down to her full, voluptuous shoulders. Her tall and majestic form was clad in a white-satin dress, richly trimmed with ermine and pearls; two clasps of costly brilliants held fast to her shoulders the small mantilla of crimson velvet, faced with ermine, which covered her back and fell down to her waist.

Thus appeared the Duchess of Richmond, the widow of King Henry's natural son, Henry Richmond; the sister of Lord Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey; and the daughter of the noble Duke of Norfolk.

Since her husband died and left her a widow at twenty, she resided in her brother's palace and had placed herself under his protection, and in the world they were known as "the affectionate brother and sister."

Ah, how little knew the world, which is ever wont to judge from appearances, of the hatred and the love of these two; how little suspicion had it of the real sentiments of this brother and sister!

Henry Howard had offered his sister his palace as her residence, because he hoped by his presence to lay on her impulsive and voluptuous disposition a restraint which should compel her not to overstep the bounds of custom and decency. Lady Richmond had accepted this offer of his palace because she was obliged to; inasmuch as the avaricious and parsimonious King gave his son's widow only a meagre income, and her own means she had squandered and lavishly thrown away upon her lovers.

Henry Howard had thus acted for the honor of his name; but he loved not his sister; nay, he despised her. But the Duchess of Richmond hated her brother, because her proud heart felt humbled by him, and under obligations to gratitude.

But their hatred and their contempt were a secret that they both preserved in the depths of the heart, and which they scarcely dared confess to themselves. Both had veiled this their inmost feeling with a show of affection, and only once in a while was one betrayed to the other by some lightly dropped word, or unregarded look.

CHAPTER II.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

LIGHTLY on the tips of her toes, the Duchess stole towards her brother, who did not yet observe her. The thick Turkish carpet made her steps inaudible. She already stood behind the Earl, and he had not yet noticed her.

Now she bent over his shoulder, and fastened her sparkling eyes on the paper in her brother's hand.

Then she read in a loud, sonorous voice the title of it: "Complaint, because Geraldine never shows herself to her lover unless covered by her veil."* Ah, said the Duchess laughing, now then I have spied out your secret, and you must surrender to me at discretion. So you are in love; and Geraldine is the name of the chosen one to whom you address your poems? I swear to you, my brother, you will repay me dear for this secret.

It is no secret at all, sister, said the Earl with a quiet smile, as he rose from the divan and saluted the Duchess. It is so little a secret that I shall recite this sonnet at the Court festival this very evening. I shall not, therefore, need your secrecy, Rosabella.

So the fair Geraldine never shows herself to you unless in a dark veil, black as the night, said the Duchess musingly. But tell me, brother, who then is the fair Geraldine? Of the ladies at Court, I know not a single one who bears that name.

So you see from that, the whole is only a fiction—a creation of my fancy.

No, indeed, said she smiling; one does not write with such warmth and enthusiasm unless he is really in love. You sing your lady-love, and you give her another name. That is very plain! Do not deny it, Henry, for I know indeed that you have a lady-love. It may be read in your eyes. And look you! it is on account of this dear one that I have come to you. It pains me, Henry, that you have no confidence in me, and allow me no share in your joys and sorrows. Do you not know, then, how tenderly I love you, my dear, noble brother?

She put her arm tenderly round his neck, and wanted to kiss him. He bent his head back, and laying his hand on her rosy, round chin, he looked inquiringly and smilingly into her eyes.

You want something of me, Rosabella! said he. I have never yet enjoyed your tenderness and sisterly affection, except when you needed my services.

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*Sonnet by Surrey. See Nott's Life and Works of Surrey.

How suspicious you are! cried she with a charming pout, as she shook his hand away from her face. I have come from wholly disinterested sympathy; partly to warn you, partly to find out whether your love is perchance fixed upon a lady that would render my warning useless.

Well, so you see, Rosabella, that I was right, and that your tenderness was not aimless. Now then, you want to warn me? I have yet to learn that I need any warning.

Nay, brother! For it would certainly be very dangerous and mischievous for you, if your love should chance not to be in accordance with the command of the King.

A momentary flush spread over Henry Howard's face, and his brow darkened.

With the King's command? asked he in astonishment. I did not know that Henry the Eighth could control my heart. And, at any rate, I would never concede him that right. Say quickly, then, sister, what is it? What means this about the King's command, and what matrimonial scheme have you women been again contriving? For I well know, that you and my mother have no rest with the thought of seeing me still unmarried! You want to bestow on me, whether or no, the happiness of marriage; yet, nevertheless, it appears to me, that you both have sufficiently learned from experience that this happiness is only imaginary, and that marriage in reality is, at the very least, the *vestibule* of hell.

It is true, laughed the Duchess; the only happy moment of my married life was when my husband died. For in that I am more fortunate than my mother, who has her tyrant still living about her. Ah, how I pity my mother!

Dare not to revile our noble father! cried the Earl almost threateningly. God alone knows how much he has suffered from our mother, and how much he still suffers. He is not to blame for this unhappy marriage. But you have not come to talk over these sad and disgraceful family matters, sister! You wish to warn me, did you say?

Yes, warn you! said the Duchess tenderly, as she took her brother's hand and led him to the ottoman. Come, let us sit down here, Henry, and let us for once chat confidentially and cordially, as becomes brother and sister. Tell me, who is Geraldine?

A phantom, an ideal! I have told you that already.

You really love then no lady at this Court?

No, none! There is among all these ladies, with whom the Queen has surrounded herself, not one whom I am able to love.

Ah, your heart then is free, Henry; and you will be so much the more easily inclined to comply with the King's wish.

What does the King wish?

She laid her head on her brother's shoulder, and said in a low whisper: That the Howard and Seymour families be at last reconciled; that

at last they may reconcile the hatred, which has for centuries separated them, by means of a firm and sincere bond of love.

Ah, the King wants that! cried the Earl scornfully. Forsooth now, he has made a good beginning towards bringing about this reconciliation. He has insulted me before all Europe, by removing me from my command and investing a Seymour with my rank and dignity; and he requires that I in return shall love this arrogant Earl, who has robbed me of what is my due: who has long intrigued and besieged the King's ear with lies and calumnies, till he has gained his end and supplanted me.

It is true the King recalled you from the army; but this was done in order to give you the first place at his Court—to appoint you Lord Chamberlain to the Queen.

Henry Howard trembled and was silent. It is true, he then muttered; I am obliged to the King for this place.

And then, continued the Duchess with an innocent air, then I do not believe either, that Lord Hertford is to blame for your recall. To prove this to you, he has made a proposal to the King, and to me also, which is to testify to you and to all the world, how great an honor Lord Hertford esteems it to be allied to the Howards, and above all things to you, by the most sacred bonds.

Ah, that noble, magnanimous Lord, cried Henry Howard, with a bitter laugh. As matters do not advance well with laurels, he tries the myrtles; since he can win no battles, he wants to make marriages. Now, sister, let me hear what he has to propose.

A double marriage, Henry. He asks my hand for his brother, Thomas Seymour, provided you choose his sister, Lady Margaret, for your wife.

Never! cried the Earl. Never will Henry Howard present his hand to a daughter of that house; never condescend so far as to elevate a Seymour to be his wife. That is well enough for a King—not for a Howard!

Brother, you insult the King!

Well, I insult him then! He has insulted me, too, in arranging this base scheme.

Brother, reflect; the Seymours are powerful, and stand high in the King's favor.

Yes, in the King's favor, they stand high! But the people knows their proud, cruel and arrogant disposition; and people and nobility despise them. The Seymours have the voice of the King in their favor; the Howards the voice of the whole country; and that is of more consequence. The King can exalt the Seymours, for they stand far beneath him. He cannot exalt the Howards, for they are his equals. Nor can he degrade them. Catharine died on the scaffold—the King became thereby only a hangman—our escutcheon was not sullied by that act!

These are very proud words, Henry!

They become a son of the Norfolks, Rosabella! Ah, see that petty Lord Hertford, Earl Seymour. He covets a ducal coronet for his sister. He wants to give her to me to wife; for as soon as our poor father

dies, I wear his coronet! The arrogant upstarts! For the sister's escutcheon, *my* coronet; for the brother's, *your* coronet. Never, say I, shall that be!

The Duchess had become pale, and a tremor ran through her proud form. Her eyes flashed, and an angry word was already suspended on her lips; but she still held it back. She violently forced herself to calmness and self possession.

Consider once more, Henry, said she; do not decide at once. You speak of our *greatness;* but you do not bear in mind the *power* of the Seymours. I tell you, they are powerful enough to tread us in the dust, despite all our greatness. And they are not only powerful at the present; they will be so in the future also; for it is well known in what disposition and way of thinking the Prince of Wales is trained up. The King is old, weak and failing; death lurks behind his throne, and will soon enough press him in his arms. Then, Edward is King. With him, the heresy of protestantism triumphs; and however great and numerous our party may be, yet we shall be powerless and subdued. Yes, we shall be the oppressed and persecuted.

We shall then know how to fight, and if it must be so, to die also! cried her brother. It is more honorable to die on the battlefield, than to purchase life by humiliation.

Yes, it is honorable to die on the field of battle; but, Henry, it is a disgrace to come to an end upon the scaffold. And that, my brother, may be your fate, if you do not this time bend your pride; if you do not grasp the hand that Lord Hertford extends to you in reconciliation, but mortally offend him. He will take bloody vengeance, when once he comes into power.

Let him do it, if he can! my life is in God's hand! My head belongs to the King, but my heart to myself; and that I will never degrade to merchandise, which I may barter for a little security and royal favor.

Brother, I conjure you, consider it! cried the Duchess, no longer able to restrain her passionate disposition, and all ablaze in her savage wrath. Dare not in proud arrogance to destroy *my* future also! You may die on the scaffold, if you choose; but I—I will be happy; I will at last, after so many years of sorrow and disgrace, have my share of life's joys also. It is my due, and I will not relinquish it; and you shall not be allowed to tear it from me. Know then, my brother, I love Thomas Seymour; all my desire, all my hope is fixed on him; and I will not tear this love out of my heart; I will not give him up.

Well, if you love him, marry him then! exclaimed her brother. Become the wife of this Thomas Seymour! Ask the Duke, our father, for his consent to this marriage, and I am certain he will not refuse you, for he is prudent and cautious, and will, better than I, calculate the advantages which a connexion with the Seymours may yield our family. Do that, sister, and marry your dearly beloved. I do not hinder you!

Yes, you do hinder me; you alone! cried his sister flaming with wrath. You will refuse Margaret's hand; you will give the Seymours

mortal offence. You thereby make my union with Thomas Seymour impossible! In the proud selfishness of your haughtiness, you see not that you are dashing to atoms my happiness, while you are thinking only of your desire to offend the Seymours. But I tell you: I love Thomas Seymour—nay, I adore him. He is my happiness, my future, my eternal bliss. Therefore have pity on me, Henry! Grant me this happiness, which I implore you for as Heaven's blessing. Prove to me that you love me, and are willing to make this sacrifice for me. Henry, on my knees, I conjure you! Give me the man I love; bend your proud head; become Margaret Seymour's husband, that Thomas Seymour may become mine.

She had actually sunk upon her knees; and her face deluged with tears, bewitchingly beautiful in her passionate emotion, she looked up imploringly to her brother.

But the Earl did not lift her up; on the contrary, with a smile, he fell back a step. How long is it now, Duchess, asked he mockingly, since you swore that your secretary, Mr. Wilford, was the man whom you loved? Positively, I believed you—I believed it till I one day found you in the arms of your page. On that day, I swore to myself never to believe you again, though you vowed to me, with an oath ever so sacred, that you loved a man. Well now, you love a man; but what one, is a matter of indifference. To-day his name is Thomas, to-morrow Archibald, or Edward, as you please!

For the first time the Earl drew the veil away from his heart, and let his sister see all the contempt and anger that he felt towards her.

The Duchess also felt wounded by his words, as by a red hot iron,

She sprung up from her knees; and with flurried breath, with looks flashing with rage, every muscle of her countenance convulsed and trembling, there she stood before her brother.

She was a woman no more; she was a lioness, that without compassion or pity, will devour him who has dared irritate her.

Earl of Surrey, you are a shameless wretch, said she with compressed, quivering lips. Were I a man, I would slap you in the face, and call you a scoundrel. But by the eternal God, you shall not say that you have done this with impunity! Once more, and for the last time, I now ask you: Will you comply with Lord Hertford's wish? Will you marry Lady Margaret and accompany me with Thomas Seymour to the altar!

No, I will not, and I will never do it! exclaimed her brother solemnly. The Howards bow not before the Seymours; and never will Henry Howard marry a wife that he does not love!

Ah, you love her not! said she breathless, gnashing her teeth. You do not love Lady Margaret; and for this reason must your sister renounce her love, and give up this man whom she adores. Ah, you love not this sister of Thomas Seymour? She is not the Geraldine whom you adore—to whom you dedicate your verses? Well now, I will find her out—your Geraldine. I will discover her: and then, woe to you

and to her! You refuse me your hand to lead me to the altar with Thomas Seymour; well now, I will one day extend you my hand to conduct you and your Geraldine to the scaffold!

And as she saw how the Earl startled and turned pale, she continued with a scornful laugh: Ah, you shrink, and horror creeps over you! Does your conscience admonish you that the hero, rigid in virtue, may yet sometimes make a false step? You thought to hide your secret, if you enveloped it in the veil of night, like your Geraldine, who, as you wailingly complain in that poem there, never shows herself to you without a veil as black as night. Just wait, wait! I will strike a light for you, before which all your night-like veils shall be torn to shreds; I will light up the night of your secret with a torch, which will be large enough to set on fire the fagot-piles about the stake to which you and your Geraldine are to go!

Ah, now you let me see for the first time your real countenance, said Henry Howard shrugging his shoulders. The angel's mask falls from your face; and I behold the Fury that was hidden beneath it. Now you are your mother's own daughter; and at this moment I comprehend for the first time what my father has suffered, and why he shunned not even the disgrace of a divorce, just to be delivered from such a Megæra.

Oh, I thank you, thank you! cried she with a savage laugh. You are filling up the measure of your iniquity. It is not enough that you drive your sister to despair; you revile your mother also! You say that we are Furies; well indeed, for we shall one day be such to you, and we will show you our Medusa-face, before which you will be stiffened to stone. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, from this hour out, I am your implacable enemy; look out for the head on your shoulders, for my hand is raised against it, and in my hand is a sword! Guard well the secret that sleeps in your breast; for you have transformed me to a vampyre that will suck your heart's blood. You have reviled my mother, and I will go hence and tell her of it. She will believe me; for she well knows that you hate her, and that you are a genuine son of your father; that is to say, a canting hypocrite, a miserable fellow, who carries virtue on the lips and crime in the heart.

Cease, I say, cease, cried the Earl, if you do not want me to forget that you are a woman and my sister!

Forget it by all means, said she scornfully. I have forgotten long since that you are my brother, as you have long since forgotten that you are the son of your mother. Farewell, Earl of Surrey; I leave you and your palace, and will from this hour out abide with my mother, the divorced wife of the Duke of Norfolk. But mark you this: we two are separated from you in our love—but not in our hate! Our hatred to you remains eternal and unchangeable; and one day it will crush you! Farewell, Earl of Surrey; we meet again in the King's presence!

She rushed to the door—Henry Howard did not hold her back. He looked after her with a smile as she left the cabinet, and murmured almost compassionately: Poor woman! I have perhaps cheated her out

of a lover, and she will never forgive me that. Well, let it be so! Let her, as much as she pleases, be my enemy and torment me with petty pin-prickings, if she be but unable to harm *her*. I hope though that I have guarded well my secret, and she could not suspect the real cause of my refusal. Ah, I was obliged to wrap myself in that foolish family pride, and make haughtiness a cloak for my love. Oh, Geraldine, *thee* would I choose, wert thou the daughter of a peasant; and I would not hold my escutcheon tarnished, if for thy sake I must draw a pale athwart it—But hark! It is striking four! My service begins! Farewell, Geraldine, I must to the Queen!

And while he betook himself to his dressing-room, to put on his state-robes for the great Court-feast, the Duchess of Richmond returned to her own apartments, trembling and quivering with rage. She traversed these with precipitate haste, and entered her boudoir where Earl Douglas was waiting for her.

Well, said he, stepping towards her with his soft, lurking smile: Has he consented?

No, said she gnashing her teeth. He swore he would never enter into an alliance with the Seymours.

I well knew that, muttered the Earl. And what do you decide upon now, my lady?

I will have revenge! He wants to hinder me from being happy; I will for that make him unhappy!

You will do well in that, my lady; for he is an apostate and perjurer; an unfaithful son of the Church. He inclines to the heretical sect, and has forgotten the faith of his fathers.

I know it! said she breathlessly.

Earl Douglas looked at her in astonishment, and continued: But he is not merely an atheist, but a traitor also; and more than once he has reviled his King, to whom he, in his pride of heart, believes himself far superior.

I know it! repeated she.

So proud is he, continued the Earl, so full of blasphemous haughtiness, that he might lay his hands upon the Crown of England.

I know it! said the Duchess again. But as she saw the Earl's astonished and doubting looks, she added with an inhuman smile: I know everything that you want that I should know! Only impute crimes to him; only accuse him; I will substantiate everything, testify to everything that will bring him to ruin. My mother is our ally; she hates the father as hotly as I the son. Bring your accusation then, Earl Douglas; we are your witnesses!

Nay indeed, my lady, said he with a gentle, insinuating smile. I know nothing at all; I have heard nothing; how then can I bring an accusation? You know all; to you he has spoken! You must be his accuser!

Well then, conduct me to the King! said she.

Will you allow me to give you some more advice first?

Do so, Earl Douglas.

Be very cautious in the choice of your means. Do not waste them all at once, so that if your first thrust does not hit, you may not be afterwards without weapons. It is better, and far less dangerous, to surely kill the enemy that you hate with a slow, creeping poison, gradually and day by day, than to murder him at once with a dagger, which may however break on a rib and become ineffective. Tell, then, what you know, not at once, but little by little! Administer your drug which is to make the King furious, gradually; and if you do not hit your enemy to day, think that you will do it so much the more surely to-morrow. Nor do you forget that we have to punish, not merely the heretic Henry Howard, but above all things the heretical Queen, whose unbelief will call down the wrath of the Most High upon this land.

Come to the King, said she hastily. On the way you can tell me what I ought to make known and what conceal. I will do implicitly what you say! Now, Henry Howard, said she softly to herself, hold yourself ready; the contest begins! In your pride and selfishness you have destroyed the happiness of my life—my eternal felicity. I loved Thomas Seymour; I hoped by his side to find the happiness that I have so long and so vainly sought in the crooked paths of life. By this love my soul would have been saved and restored to virtue. My brother has willed otherwise. He has, therefore, condemned me to be a demon, instead of an angel. I will fulfil my destiny. I will be an evil spirit to him.*

CHAPTER III.

THE QUEEN'S TOILET.

The festivities of the day are concluded, and the gallant knights and champions, who have to-day broken a lance for the honor of their ladies, may rest from their victories upon their laurels. The tournament of arms was over, and the tournament of mind was about to begin. The knights, therefore, retired to exchange the coat of mail for gold-embroidered velvet apparel; the ladies to put on their lighter evening dresses; and the Queen, likewise with this design, had withdrawn to her dressing-room, while the ladies and lords of her Court were in attendance in the large ante-room to escort her to the throne.

* The Earl of Surrey, by his refusal to marry Margaret Seymour, gave occasion to the rupture of the proposed alliance between Thomas Seymour and the Duchess of Richmond, his sister. After that, the Duchess mortally hated him and combined with his enemies against him. The Duchess of Richmond is designated by all the historians of her time, as "the most beautiful woman of her century, but also a shameless Messalina" See Tytler, page 390. Also Burnet, vol. 1, page 134. Leti, vol. 1. page 88. and Nott's Life of Henry Howard.

Without, it was beginning to grow dusky, and the twilight cast its long shadows across this hall, in which the cavaliers of the Court were walking up and down with the ladies, and discussing particular important event of the day's tourney.

The Earl of Sudley, Thomas Seymour, had borne off the prize of the day, and conquered his opponent, Henry Howard. The King had been in raptures on this account. For Thomas Seymour had been for some time his favorite; perhaps, because he was the declared enemy of the Howards. He had, therefore, added to the golden laurel crown, which the Queen had presented to the Earl as the award, a diamond pin, and commanded the Queen to fasten it in the Earl's ruff with her own hand. Catharine had done so with sullen countenance and averted looks; and even Thomas Seymour had shown himself only very little delighted with the proud honor with which the Queen, at her husband's command, was to grace him.

The rigid popish party at Court formed new hopes from this, and dreamed of the Queen's conversion and return to the true, pure faith; while the protestant, "the heretical" party looked to the future with gloomy despondency, and were afraid of being robbed of their most powerful support and their most influential patronage.

Nobody had seen that as the Queen arose to crown the victor, Thomas Seymour, her handkerchief, embroidered with gold, fell from her hands, and that the Earl, after he had taken it up and presented it to the Queen, had thrust his hand for a moment, with a motion wholly accidental and undesigned, into his ruff, which was just as white as the small neatly folded paper which he concealed in it, and which he had found in the Queen's handkerchief.

One person had seen it. This little ruse of the Queen had not escaped John Heywood, who had immediately, by some cutting witticism, set the King to laughing, and tried to draw the attention of the courtiers from the Queen and her lover.

He was now standing crowded into the embrasure of a window, and entirely concealed behind the silk curtain; and so, without being seen, he let his falcon eyes roam over the whole room.

He saw everything; he heard everything; and noticed by none, he observed all.

He saw how Earl Douglas now made a sign to Bishop Gardiner, and how he quickly answered it.

As if by accident, both now left the groups with whom they had just been chatting, and drew near each other, looking about for some place where, unobserved and separated from the rest, they might converse together. In all the windows were standing groups chatting and laughing; only that window behind the curtain of which John Heywood was concealed, was unoccupied.

So Earl Douglas and the Bishop turned thither.

Shall we attain our end to day? asked Gardiner in a low voice.

With God's gracious assistance, we shall annihilate all our enemies

to-day. The sword already hangs over their heads, and soon it will fall and deliver us from them, said Earl Douglas solemnly.

Are you then certain of it? asked Gardiner, and an expression of cruel delight flitted across his malicious ashy face. But tell me; how comes it that Archbishop Cranmer is not here?

He is sick, and so had to remain at Lambeth.

May this sickness be the forerunner of his death! muttered the Bishop, devoutly folding his hands.

It will be so, your Highness; God will destroy his enemies and bless us. Cranmer is accused; and the King will judge him without mercy.

And the Queen?

Earl Douglas was a moment silent, and then said in a low whisper: Wait but a few hours more, and she will be Queen no longer. Instead of returning from the throne-room to her apartments, we shall accompany her to the Tower.

John Heywood, completely enveloped in the folds of the curtain, held his breath and listened.

And you are then perfectly sure of our victory? asked Gardiner. Can no accident, no unforeseen circumstance snatch it from us?

If the Queen gives him the rosette—no! For then the King will find Geraldine's love-letter in the silver knot, and she is condemned. So all depends on the Queen's wearing the rosette, and not discovering its contents. But see, your Highness, there is the Duchess of Richmond approaching us. She makes a sign to me. Now pray for us, your Highness, for now I am going with her to the King, and she will accuse this hated Catharine Parr! I tell you, Bishop, it is an accusation involving life and death; and if Catharine escape one danger, she will run into another. Wait here for me, your Highness; I will return soon and tell you the result of our scheme. Lady Jane, also, will soon bring us news here.

He left the window and followed the Duchess, who crossed the hall, and with her disappeared through the door that led to the King's apartments.

The ladies and lords of the Court laughed and chatted away.

John Heywood stood, with throbbing heart and in breathless anxiety behind the curtain, close by Gardiner, who had folded his hands and was praying.

While Gardiner prayed, and Douglas accused and calumniated, the Queen, suspecting nothing of these plots they were framing against her, was in her toilet-room and being adorned by her women.

She was to-day very beautiful, very magnificent to look upon; at once a woman and queen; at the same time resplendent and modest, with a bewitching smile on her rosy lips; and yet commanding respect in her proud and glorious beauty.

None of Henry's queens had so well understood the art of appearing in public; and none remained so much the woman while doing so.

As she now stood before the large mirror, which the Republic of Ve-

nice had sent the King as a wedding gift, and which reflected the figure of the Queen sparkling with diamonds, she smiled; for she was obliged to confess to herself that she was very beautiful to day; and she thought that to-day Thomas Seymour would look upon his love with pride.

As she thought of him, a deep crimson overspread her face, and a thrill flew through her frame. How handsome he had been at the tournament that day; how splendidly he leaped over the barriers; how his eye flashed; how contemptuous had been his smile! And then, that look, which he directed over to her at the moment when he had conquered his antagonist, Henry Howard, and hurled the lance from his hand! Oh, my God! her heart was ready to burst with delight and rapture!

Wholly given up to her revery, she sank in her gilded arm-chair and cast her eyes to the ground, dreaming and smiling.

Behind her stood her women in respectful silence, waiting for a sign from their mistress. But the Queen no longer thought at all of them; she imagined herself alone; she saw nobody but that handsome, manly face, for which she had reserved a place in her heart.

Now the door opened, and Lady Jane Douglas entered. She, too, was magnificently dressed, and sparkling with diamonds; she, too, was beautiful, but it was the pallid, dreadful beauty of a demon; and he who looked on her just then, as she entered the room, would have trembled and his heart would have been seized with an undefined fear.

She threw a quick glance on her mistress whilst in revery; and as she saw that her toilet was finished, she made a sign to the women, who silently obeyed, and left the room.

Still Catharine noticed nothing. Lady Jane stood behind her and observed her in the mirror. As she saw the Queen smile, her brow darkened and fierce wrath flashed in her eyes.

She shall smile no more, said she to herself. I suffer thus terribly by her; well now, she shall suffer too.

Softly and noiselessly she slipped into the next room, the door of which stood ajar, and opened with hurried hand a *carton* filled with ribbons and bows. Then she drew from the velvet pocket, wrought with pearls, which hung at her side suspended by a gold chain, a dark red rosette, and threw it into the box. That was all.

Lady Jane now returned to the adjoining room; and her countenance, which had been previously gloomy and threatening, was now proud and joyful.

With a bright smile she walked up to the Queen, and kneeling down at her side, she pressed a fervent kiss on the hand that was hanging down.

What is my Queen musing over? asked she, as she laid her head on Catharine's knee and tenderly looked up at her.

The Queen gave a slight start, and raised her head. She saw Lady Jane's tender smile, and her yet searching looks.

Because she felt conscious of guilt, at least of guilty thoughts, she was on her guard, and remembered John Heywood's warning.

She is observing me, said she to herself; she seems affectionate; so she is brooding over some wicked plot.

Ah, it is well you have come, Jane, said she aloud. You can help me; for to tell you the truth, I am in great perplexity. I am in want of a rhyme, and I am thinking in vain how I shall find it.

Ah, are you composing poetry, Queen?

Why, Jane, does that surprise you? Shall I, the Queen, be able then to bear off no prize? I would give my precious jewels, if I could succeed in composing a poem to which the King was obliged to award the prize. But I am wanting in a musical ear; I cannot find the rhyme, and so shall be obliged at last to give up the idea of winning laurels also. How the King would enjoy it, though! For, to confess the truth to you, I believe he is a little afraid that Henry Howard will bear off the prize, and he would be very thankful to me if I could contest it with him. You well know, the King has no love for the Howards.

And you, Queen? asked Jane; and she turned so pale that the Queen herself noticed it.

You are unwell, Jane, said she sympathizingly. Really, Jane, you seem to be suffering. You need recreation; you should rest a little.

But Jane had already regained her calm and earnest air, and she succeeded in smiling.

No, indeed! said she, I am well and satisfied to be permitted to be near you. But will you allow me, Queen, to make a request of you?

Ask, Jane, ask, and it is granted beforehand; for I know that Jane will request nothing that her friend cannot grant.

Lady Jane was silent and looked thoughtfully upon the ground. With firm resolution she struggled with herself. Her proud heart reared fiercely up at the thought of bowing before this woman, whom she hated, and of being obliged to approach her with a fawning prayer. She felt such raging hate against the Queen, that in that hour she would willingly have given her own life, if she could have first seen her enemy at her feet, wailing and crushed.

Henry Howard loved the Queen; so Catharine had robbed her of the heart of him whom she adored. Catharine had condemned her to the eternal torment of renouncing him—to the rack of enjoying a happiness and a rapture that was not hers—to warm herself at a fire which she like a thief had stolen from the altar of another's God.

Catharine was condemned and doomed.

Jane had no more compassion. She must crush her.

Well, asked the Queen, you are silent? You do not tell me what I am to grant you?

Lady Jane raised her eyes, and her look was serene and peaceful. Queen, said she, I encountered in the ante room, one who is unhappy, deeply bowed down. In your hand alone is the power to raise him up again. Will you do it?

Will I do it! exclaimed Catharine quickly. Oh, Jane, you well know, how much my heart longs to help and be serviceable to the unfortunate!

Ah, so many wounds are inflicted at this Court, and the Queen is so poor in balm to heal them. Allow me this pleasure then, Jane, and I shall be thankful to you, not you to me! Speak then, Jane, speak quickly; who is it that needs my help?

Not your help, Queen, but your compassion and your grace. Earl Sudley has conquered poor Earl Surrey in the tournament to day, and you comprehend that your Lord Chamberlain feels himself deeply bowed and humbled.

Can I alter that, Jane? Why did the visionary Earl, the enthusiastic poet, allow himself in a contest with a hero, who always knows what he wants, and ever accomplishes what he wills? Oh, it was wonderful to look upon, with what lightening speed Thomas Seymour lifted him out of the saddle. And the proud Earl Surrey, the wise and learned man, the powerful party leader, was forced to bow before the hero, who like an angel Michael had thrown him in the dust.

The Queen laughed.

That laugh went through Jane's heart like a cutting sword.

She shall pay me for that! said she softly to herself. Queen, said she aloud, you are perfectly right; he has deserved this humiliation; but now, after he is punished, you should lift him up. Nay, do not shake your beautiful head. Do it for your own sake, Queen; do it from prudence. Earl Surrey, with his father, is the head of a powerful party, whom this humiliation of the Howards fills with a still more burning hate against the Seymours, and who will in time to come take a bloody revenge for it.

Ah, you frighten me! said the Queen, who had now become serious.

Lady Jane continued: I saw how the Duke of Norfolk bit his lips, as his son had to yield to Seymour; I heard how one, here and there, muttered low curses and vows of vengeance against the Seymours.

Who did that? Who dared do it? exclaimed Catharine springing up impetuously from her arm-chair. Who at this Court is so audacious as to wish to injure those whom the Queen loves? Name him to me, Jane; I will know his name! I will know it, that I may accuse him to the King. For the King does not want that these noble Seymours should give way to the Howards; he does not want that the nobler, the better and more glorious should bow before these quarrelsome, domineering papists. The King loves the noble Seymours, and his powerful arm will protect them against all their enemies.

And, without doubt, your Majesty will assist him in it? said Jane smiling.

This smile brought the Queen back to her senses again.

She perceived that she had gone too far; that she had betrayed too much of her secret. She must, therefore, repair the damage, and allow her excitement to be forgotten.

Therefore she said calmly: Certainly, Jane; I will assist the King to be just. But never will I be unjust, not even against these papists. If

I cannot love them, nevertheless no one shall say that I hate them. And besides, it becomes a Queen to rise above parties. Say then, Jane, what can I do for poor Surrey? With what shall we bind up these wounds, that the brave Seymour has inflicted on him?

You have publicly given the victor in the tournament a token of your great favor—you have crowned him.

It was the King's order! exclaimed Catharine warmly.

Well! He will not, however, command you to reward the Earl of Surrey also, if he, likewise, should gain the victory this evening. Do it, therefore, of your own accord. Queen. Give him openly, before your whole Court, a token of your favor. My God, it is so easy for princes to make men happy, to comfort the unfortunate. A smile, a friendly word, a pressure of the hand is sufficient for it. A ribbon that you wear on your dress, makes him to whom you present it proud and happy, and raises him high above all others. Ponder it well, Queen; I speak not for Earl Surrey's sake; I am thinking more of yourself. If you have the courage, publicly and in spite of the disgrace with which King Henry threatens the Howards, to be nevertheless just to them, and to recognize *their* merits as well as that of others—believe me, if you do that, the whole of this powerful party, which is now hostile to you, will fall at your feet overcome and conquered. You will at last become the all-powerful and universally loved Queen of England; and, like the heretics, the papists also will call you their mistress and protectress. Consider no longer! Let your noble and generous heart prevail! Spiteful fortune has prostrated Henry Howard in the dust. Extend him your hand, Queen, that he may rise again, and again stand there at your Court, proud and radiant as he always was. Henry Howard well deserves that you should be gracious to him. Great and beaming like a star, he shines on high above all men; and there is no one who can say that he himself is more prudent or braver, wiser or more learned, nobler or greater, than the noble, the exalted Surrey. All England resounds with his fame. The women repeat with enthusiasm his beautiful sonnets and love songs; the learned are proud to call him their equal, and the warriors speak with admiration of his feats of arms. Be just, then, Queen! You have so highly honored the merit of valor; now, honor the merit of mind also! You have in Seymour, honored the warrior; now in Howard, honor the poet and the man!

I will do it, said Catharine, as with a charming smile she looked into Jane's glowing and enthusiastic countenance. I will do it, Jane, but upon one condition!

And this condition is?

Catharine put her arm around Jane's neck, and drew her close to her heart. That you confess to me, you love Henry Howard, whom you know how to defend so enthusiastically and warmly.

Lady Jane gave a start, and for a moment lent her head on the Queen's shoulder exhausted.

Well, asked she, do you confess it? Will you acknowledge that your proud, cold heart is obliged to declare itself overcome and conquered?

Yes, I confess it, cried Lady Jane, as with passionate vehemence she threw herself at Catharine's feet. Yes, I love him—I adore him. I know it is a disdained and unhappy love; but what would you have? My heart is mightier than everything else. I love him; he is my god and my lord; I adore him as my saviour and lord. Queen, you know all my secret; betray me, if you will! Tell it to my father, if you wish him to curse me. Tell it to Henry Howard, if it pleases you to hear how he scoffs at me. For he, Queen—he loves me not!

Poor unfortunate Jane! exclaimed the Queen compassionately.

Jane uttered a low cry, and rose from her knees. That was too much. Her enemy commiserated her. She, who was to blame for her sorrow—she bemoaned her fate.

Ah, she could have strangled the Queen; she could have plunged a dagger into her heart, because she dared to commiserate her.

I have complied with your condition, Queen, said she, breathing hurriedly. Will you now comply with my request?

And will you really be an advocate for this unthankful, cruel man, who does not love you? Proudly and coldly he passes your beauty by, and you—you intercede for him?

Queen, true love thinks not of itself; it sacrifices itself! It makes no question of the reward it receives, but only of the happiness which it bestows. I saw in his pale, sorrowful face, how much he suffered; ought I not to think of comforting him? I approached him, I addressed him; I heard his despairing lamentation over that misfortune, which, however, was not the fault of his activity and courage, but, as all the world saw, the fault of his horse, which was shy and stumbled. And as he, in all the bitterness of his pain, was lamenting that you, Queen, would despise and scorn him, I, with full trust in your noble and magnanimous heart, promised him that you would, at my request, yet give him to-day, before your whole Court, a token of your favor. Catharine, did I do wrong?

No, Jane, no! You did right; and your words shall be made good. But how shall I begin? What shall I do?

The Earl this evening, after the King has read the Greek scene with Croke, will recite some new sonnets which he has composed. When he has done so, give him some kind of a present—be it what it may, no matter—as a token of your favor.

But how, Jane, if his sonnets deserve no praise and no acknowledgment?

You may be sure that they do deserve it. For Henry Howard is a noble and true poet, and his verses are full of heavenly melody and exalted thoughts.

The Queen smiled. Yes, said she, you love him ardently; for you

have no doubt as to him. We will, therefore, recognize him as a great poet. But with what shall I reward him?

Give him a rose that you wear in your bosom—a rosette that is fastened to your dress and shows your colors.

But alas, Jane, to-day I wear neither a rose, nor a rosette.

Yet you can wear one, Queen! A rosette is indeed wanting here on your shoulder. Your purple mantle is too negligently fastened. We must put some trimming here.

She went hastily into the next room and returned with the box, in which were kept the Queen's ribbons embroidered with gold, and bows adorned with jewels.

Lady Jane searched and selected, here and there, a long time. Then she took the crimson velvet rosette, which she herself had previously thrown into the box, and showed it to the Queen.

See; it is at the same time tasteful and rich, for a diamond clasp confines it in the middle. Will you allow me to fasten this rosette on your shoulder, and will you give it to the Earl of Surrey?

Yes, Jane, I will give it to him, because you wish it. But, poor Jane, what will you gain by my doing it?

At any rate, a friendly smile, Queen.

And is that enough for you? Do you love him so much, then?

Yes, I love him! said Jane Douglas with a sigh of pain, as she fastened the rosette on the Queen's shoulder.

And now, Jane, go and announce to the Master of Ceremonies that I am ready, as soon as the King wishes it, to resort to the gallery.

Lady Jane turned to leave the chamber. But already upon the threshold, she returned once more.

Forgive me, Queen, for venturing to make one more request of you. You have, however, just shown yourself too much the noble and true friend of earlier days for me not to venture one more request.

Now, what is it, poor Jane?

I have entrusted my secret not to the Queen, but to Catharine Parr, the friend of my youth. Will she keep it, and betray to none my disgrace and my humiliation?

My word for that, Jane. Nobody but God and ourselves shall ever know what we have here spoken.

Lady Jane humbly kissed her hand and murmured a few words of thanks; then she left the Queen's room to go in quest of the Master of Ceremonies.

In the Queen's ante room she stopped a moment, and leant against the wall exhausted and as it were crushed. Nobody was here who could observe and listen to her. She had no need to smile, no need to conceal, beneath a calm and equable appearance, all those tempestuous and despairing feelings which were working within. She could allow her hatred and her resentment, her rage and her despair, to pour forth in words and gestures, in tears and imprecations, in sobs and sighs. She could

fall on her knees and beseech God for grace and mercy, and call on the Devil for revenge and destruction.

When she had so done, she arose, and her demeanor resumed its wonted cold and calm expression. Only her cheeks were still paler; only a still gloomier fire darted from her eyes, and a scornful smile played about her thin, compressed lips.

She traversed the rooms and corridors, and now she entered the King's ante room. As she observed Gardiner, who was standing alone and separated from the rest in the embrasure of the window, she went up to him; and John Heywood, who was still hidden behind the curtain, shuddered at the frightful and scornful expression of her features.

She offered the Bishop her hand, and tried to smile. It is done, said she almost inaudibly.

What? The Queen wears the rosette? asked Gardiner vivaciously.

She wears the rosette, and will give it to him.

And the note is in it?

It is concealed under the diamond clasp.

Oh, then she is lost! muttered Gardiner. If the King finds this paper, Catharine's death-warrant is signed.

Hush! said Lady Jane. See! Lord Hertford is coming towards us. Let us go to meet him!

They both left the window and walked out into the hall.

John Heywood immediately slipped from behind the curtain, and, softly gliding along by the wall, left the hall perceived by no one.

Outside, he stopped and reflected.

I must see this conspiracy to the bottom, said he to himself. I must find out through whom and by what they wish to destroy her; and I must have sure and undeniable proof in my hands, in order to be able to convict them, and successfully accuse them to the King. Therefore it is necessary to be cautious and prudent. So let us consider what to do. The simplest thing would be to beg the Queen not to wear the rosette. But that is only to demolish the web for this time, without, however, being able to kill the spider that wove it. So she must wear the rosette; for besides, without that I should never be able either to find out to whom she is to give it. But the paper that is concealed in the rosette—that I must have—that must not be in it. "If the King finds this paper, Catharine's death-warrant is signed." Now, my reverend priest of the devil, the King will not find that paper, for John Heywood will not have it so. But how shall I begin? Shall I tell the Queen what I heard? No! She would lose her cheerful spirit and become embarrassed, and the embarrassment would be in the King's eyes the most convincing proof of her guilt. No, I must take this paper out of the rosette without the Queen's being aware of it. Boldly to work then! I must have this paper and tweak these hypocrites by the nose. How it can be done, it is not clear to me yet; but I will do it—that is enough. Halloo, forward to the Queen!

With precipitant haste he ran through the halls and corridors, while

with a smile he muttered away to himself: Thank God, I enjoy the honor of being the fool; for only the King and the fool have the privilege of being able to enter unannounced every room, even the Queen's.

Catharine was alone in her boudoir, when the small door, through which the King was accustomed to resort to her, was softly opened.

Oh, the King is coming! said she, walking to the door to greet her husband.

Yes, the King is coming, for the fool is already here, said John Heywood, who entered through the private door. Are we alone, Queen? Does nobody overhear us?

No, John Heywood, we are all alone. What do you bring me?

A letter, Queen.

From whom? asked she, and a glowing crimson flitted over her cheek.

From whom? repeated John Heywood with a waggish smile. I do not know, Queen; but at any rate it is a begging letter; and without doubt you would do well not to read it at all; for I bet you, the shameless writer of this letter demands of you some impossibility—it may be a smile, or a pressure of the hand, a lock of your hair, or perchance even a kiss. So, Queen, do not read the begging letter at all.

John, said she smiling and yet trembling with impatience, John, give me the letter.

I will sell it to you, Queen. I have learned *that* from the King, who likewise gives nothing away generously, without taking in return more than he gives. So let us trade. I give you the letter; you give me the rosette which you wear on your shoulder there.

Nay, indeed, John; choose something else—I cannot give you the rosette.

And by the Gods be it sworn, exclaimed John with comic pathos, I give you not the letter, if you do not give me the rosette.

Silly loon, said the Queen. I tell you I cannot! Choose something else, John; and I conjure you, dear John, give me the letter.

Then only, when you give me the rosette. I have sworn it by the the gods, and what I vow to them, that I stick to! No, no, Queen—not those sullen airs, not that angry frown. For if I cannot in earnest receive the rosette as a present, then let us do like the Jesuits and papists, who even trade with the dear God and snap their fingers at him. I must keep my oath! I give you the letter, and you give me the rosette; but listen—you only lend it to me; and when I have had it in my hand a moment, I am generous and bountiful, like the King, and I make you a present of your own property.

With a quick motion, the Queen tore the rosette from her shoulder and handed it to John Heywood.

Now give me the letter, John.

Here it is, said John Heywood as he received the rosette. Take it; and you will see that Thomas Seymour is my brother.

Your brother? asked Catharine with a smile, as with trembling hand she broke the seal.

Yes, my brother, for he is a fool! Ah, I have a great many brothers. The family of fools is so very large!

The Queen no longer heard. She was reading the letter of her lover. She had eyes only for those lines, that told her that Thomas Seymour loved her, adored her, and was pining away with longing after her.

She did not see how John Heywood, with nimble hand, unfastened the diamond clasp from the rosette, and took out of it the little paper that was concealed in the folds of the ribbon.

She is saved! murmured he, while he thrust the fatal paper into his doublet, and fastened the clasp again with the pin. She is saved, and the King will not sign her death-warrant this time.

Catharine had read the letter to the end, and hid it in her bosom.

Queen, you have sworn to burn up every letter that I bring you from *him;* for, forbidden love letters are dangerous things. One day they may find a tongue and testify against you! Queen, I will not bring you again another letter, if you do not first burn that one.

John, I will burn it up when once I have really read it. Just now I read it only with my heart, not with my eyes. Allow me, then, to wear it on my heart a few hours more.

Do you swear to me that you will burn it up this very day?

I swear it.

Then I will be satisfied this time. Here is your rosette; and like the famous fox in the fable, that pronounced the grapes sour because he could not get them, I say: take your rosette back! I will have noneof it.

He handed the Queen the rosette, and she smilingly fastened it on her shoulder again.

John, said she with a bewitching smile, extending her hand to him, John, when will you at length permit me to thank you otherwise than with words? When will you at length allow your Queen to reward you, for all this service of love, otherwise than with words?

John Heywood kissed her hand, and said mournfully: I will demand a reward of you on the day when my tears and my prayers succeed in persuading you to renounce this wretched and dangerous love. On that day I shall have really deserved a reward, and I will accept it from you with a proud heart.

Poor John! So then you will never receive your reward; for that day will never come!

So then I shall probably receive my reward, but from the King; and it will be a reward whereby one loses hearing and sight, and head to boot. Well, we shall see! Till then, farewell, Queen. I must to the King; for somebody might surprise me here, and come to the shrewd conclusion that John Heywood is not always a fool, but sometimes also the messenger of love! I kiss the hem of your garment; farewell, Queen!

He glided again through the private door.

Now we will at once examine this paper, said he, as he reached the corridor and was sure of being seen by no one.

He drew the paper out of his doublet and opened it. I do not know the hand writing, muttered he, but it was a woman that wrote it.

The letter read: "Do you believe me now, my beloved? I swore to deliver to you to day, in the presence of the King and of all my Court, this rosette; and I have done so. For you, I gladly risk my life; for you are my life; and still more beautiful were it to die with you, than to live without you. I live only when I rest in your arms; and those dark nights, when you can be with me, are the light and sunshine of my days. Let us pray Heaven a dark night may soon come; for such a night restores to me the loved one, and to you, your happy wife, Geraldine."

Geraldine! who is Geraldine? muttered John Heywood, slipping the paper into his doublet again. I must disentangle this web of lying and deceit. I must know what all this means. For this is more than a conspiracy—a false accusation. It concerns, as it seems, a reality. This letter the Queen is to give to a man; and in it, sweet recollections, happy nights are spoken of. So he who receives this letter is in league with them against Catharine, and I dare say her worst enemy, for he makes use of love against her. Some treachery or knavery is concealed behind this. Either the man, to whom this letter is addressed, is deceived—and he is unintentionally a tool in the hands of the papists—or he is in league with them, and has given himself up to the villiany of playing the part of lover to the Queen. But who can he be? Perchance Thomas Seymour? It were possible; for he has a cold and deceitful heart, and he would be capable of such treachery. But woe be to him if it is he. Then it will be *I* who accuses him to the King; and by God, his head shall fall. Now away to the King!

Just as he entered the King's ante-room, the door of the cabinet opened, and the Duchess of Richmond, accompanied by Earl Douglas, walked out.

Lady Jane and Gardiner were standing, as if by accident, near the door.

Well, have we attained our end there also? asked Gardiner.

We have attained it, said Earl Douglas. The Duchess has accused her brother of a *liaison* with the Queen. She has deposed that he sometimes leaves the palace by night, and does not return to it before morning. She has declared that for four nights she herself dogged her brother and saw him as he entered the wing of the castle occupied by the Queen; and one of the Queen's maids has communicated to the Duchess that the Queen was not in her room on that night.

And the King listened to the accusation, and did not throttle you in his wrath?

He is yet in that dull state of rage in which the lava, which the crater will afterwards pour forth, is just prepared. As yet all is quiet, but be sure, there will be an eruption, and the stream of red-hot lava will bury those who have dared excite the god Vulcan.

And does he know about the rosette? asked Lady Jane.

He knows everything. And until that moment he will allow no one to suspect his wrath and fury. He says he will make the Queen perfectly secure, in order to get into his hands thereby sure proof of her guilt. Well, we will furnish him this evidence; and hence it follows that the Queen is inevitably lost.

But hark! The doors are opened, and the Master of Ceremonies comes to summon us to the golden gallery.

Just walk in, muttered John Heywood, gliding along behind them. I am still here; and I will be the mouse that gnaws the net in which you want to catch my noble-minded lioness.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEEN'S ROSETTE.

The golden gallery, in which the tourney of the poets was to take place, presented to day a truly enchanting and fairy-like aspect. Mirrors of gigantic size, set in broad gilt frames, ornamented with the most perfect carved work, covered the walls, and threw back a thousand times reflected, the enormous chandeliers which, with their hundreds and hundreds of candles, shed the light of day in the vast hall. Here and there were seen, arranged in front of the mirrors, clusters of the rarest and choicest flowers, which poured through the hall their fragrance, stupefying, and yet so enchanting, and outshone in brilliancy of colors even the Turkish carpet, which stretched through the whole room and changed the floor into one immense flower-bed. Between the clumps of flowers were seen tables with golden vases, in which were refreshing beverages; while at the other end of the enormous gallery stood a gigantic sideboard, which contained the choicest and rarest dishes. At present, the doors of the sideboard, which, when open, formed a room of itself, were yet closed.

They had not yet come to the material enjoyments; they were still occupied in absorbing the spiritual. The brilliant and select company that filled the hall, was still for some time condemned to be silent and to shut up within them their laughter and gossip, their backbiting and slander, their flattery and hypocrisy.

Just now a pause ensued. The King, with Croke, had recited to his Court a scene from "Antigone;" and they were just taking breath from the wonderful and exalted enjoyment of having heard a language, of which they understood not a word, but which they found to be very beautiful, since the King admired it.

Henry the Eighth had again leant back on his golden throne, and, panting, rested from his prodigious exertion; and while he rested and dreamed, an invisible band played a piece of music composed by the King himself, and which, with its serious and solemn movement, strangely contrasted with this room so brilliant and cheerful—with this splendid, laughing and jesting assembly.

For the King had bidden them amuse themselves and be gay; to give themselves up to unrestrained chit-chat. It was, therefore, natural for them to laugh, and to appear not to notice the King's exhaustion and repose.

Besides, they had not for a long time seen Henry so cheerful, so full of youthful life, so sparkling with wit and humor, as on this evening. His mouth was overflowing with jests that made the gentlemen laugh and the beautiful, brilliant women blush, and above all, the young Queen, who sat by him on the rich and splendid throne, and now and then only threw stolen and longing glances at her lover, for whom she would willingly and gladly have given her royal crown and her throne.

When the King saw how Catharine blushed, he turned to her, and in his tenderest tone begged her pardon for his jest, which, however, in its sauciness, served only to make his Queen still more beautiful, still more bewitching. His words were then so tender and heartfelt, his looks so full of love and admiration, that nobody could doubt but that the Queen was in highest favor with her husband, and that he loved her most tenderly.

Only the few who knew the secret of this tenderness of the King, so open and so unreservedly displayed, comprehended fully the danger which threatened the Queen; for the King was never more to be dreaded than when he fluttered; and on no one did his wrath fall more crushingly than on him whom he had just kissed and assured of his favor.

This was what Earl Douglas said to himself, when he saw with what a cordial look Henry the Eighth chatted with his consort.

Behind the throne of the royal pair was seen John Heywood, in his fantastic and dressy costume, with his face at once noble and cunning; and the King just then broke out into loud, resounding laughter at his sarcastic and satirical observations.

King, your laugh does not please me to-day, said John Heywood earnestly. It smacks of gall. Do you not find it so, Queen?

The Queen was startled from her sweet reveries, and that was what John Heywood had wished. He, therefore, repeated his question.

No indeed, said she; I find the King to-day quite like the sun. He is radiant and bright, like it.

Queen, you do not mean the sun, but the full moon, said John Heywood. But only see, Henry, how cheerfully Earl Archibald Douglas over there is chatting with the Duchess of Richmond. I love that good Earl. He always appears like a blindworm, which is just in the notion of stinging some one on the heel, and hence it comes, that when near the Earl, I always transform myself into a crane. I stand on one leg; be-

cause I am then sure to have the other at least safe from the Earl's sting. King, were I like you, I would not have those killed that the blind worm has stung; but I would root out the blindworms, that the feet of honorable men might be secure from them.

The King cast at him a quick, searching look, which John Heywood answered with a smile.

Kill the blindworms, King Henry, said he; and when you are once at work destroying vermin, it will do no harm if you once more give these priests also a good kick. It is now a long time since we burnt any of them, and they are again becoming arrogant and malicious, as they always were and always will be. I see even the pious and meek Bishop of Winchester, the noble Gardiner, who is entertaining himself with Lady Jane over there, smiling very cheerfully, and that is a bad sign; for Gardiner smiles only when he has again caught a poor soul, and prepared it as a breakfast for his lord. I do not mean you, King, but his lord—the Devil. For the Devil is always hungry for noble human souls; and to him who catches one for him he gives indulgence for his sins for an hour. Therefore Gardiner catches so many souls; for since he sins every hour, every hour he needs indulgence.

You are very spiteful to day, John Heywood, said the Queen smiling, while the King fixed his eyes on the ground, thoughtful and musing.

John Heywood's words had touched the sore place of his heart, and, in spite of himself, filled his suspicious heart with new doubts.

He mistrusted not merely the accused, but the accusers also; and if he punished the one as criminals, he would have willingly punished the others also as informants.

He asked himself: What aim had Earl Douglas and Gardiner in accusing the Queen; and why had they startled him out of his quiet and confidence? At that moment, when he looked on his beautiful wife, who sat by him in such serene tranquility, unembarrassed and smiling, he felt a deep anger fill his heart, not against Catharine, but against Jane, who accused her.

She was so lovely and beautiful! Why did they envy him her? Why did they not leave him in his sweet delusion? But perhaps she was not guilty. No, she was not. The eye of a culprit is not thus bright and clear. The air of a strumpet is not thus unembarrassed—of such maidenly delicacy.

Moreover the King was exhausted and disgusted. One can become satiated even with cruelty; and, at this hour, Henry felt completely surfeited with bloodshed.

His heart—for in such moments of mental relaxation and bodily enfeeblement, the King even had a heart—his heart was already in the notion of pronouncing the word pardon, when the King's eye fell on Henry Howard, who, with his father, the Duke of Norfolk, and surrounded by a circle of brilliant and noble lords, was standing not far from the royal throne.

The King felt a deadly stab in his breast, and his eyes darted lightning over towards that group.

How proud and imposing the figure of the noble Earl looked; how high he overtopped all others; how noble and handsome his countenance; how kingly his bearing, his whole appearance was!

Henry must admit all this; and because he must do so, he hated him.

Nay! no mercy for Catharine! If what her accusers had told him was true—if they could give him the proofs of the Queen's guilt, then she was doomed. And how could he doubt it? Had they not told him that in the rosette, which the Queen would give Earl Surrey, was contained a love-letter from Catharine, which he would find? Had not Earl Surrey, in a confidential hour, yesterday imparted this to his sister, the Duchess of Richmond, when he wished to bribe her to be the messenger of love between the Queen and himself? Had she not accused the Queen of having meetings by night with the Earl in the deserted tower?

Nay, no compassion for his fair Queen, if Henry Howard was her lover.

He must again look over at his hated enemy. There he still stood by his father, the Duke of Norfolk. How sprightly and gracefully the old Duke moved; how slim his form; and how lofty and imposing his bearing! The King was younger than the Duke; and yet he was fettered to his truckle-chair; yet he sat on his throne like an immovable colossus, while *he* moved freely and lightly, and obeyed his own will, not necessity. Henry could have crushed him—this proud, arrogant Earl, who was a free man, whilst his King was nothing but a prisoner to his own flesh, a slave of his unwieldly body.

I will exterminate it—this proud, arrogant race of Howards! muttered the King, as he turned with a friendly smile to the Earl of Surrey.

You have promised us some of your poems, cousin! said he. So let us now enjoy them; for you see, indeed, how impatiently all the beautiful women look on England's noblest and greatest poet; and how very angry with me they would be, if I still longer withhold this enjoyment from them. Even my fair Queen is full of longing after your songs, so rich in fancy; for you well know, Howard, she loves poetry, and above all things, yours!

Catharine had scarcely heard what the King said. Her looks had encountered Seymour's, and their eyes were fixed on each other's. But she had then cast down to the floor her eye, still completely filled with the sight of her lover, in order to think of him, since she no longer dared gaze at him.

When the King called her name, she started up and looked at him inquiringly. She had not heard what he said to her.

Not even for a moment does she look towards me! said Henry Howard to himself. Oh, she loves me not; or at least her understanding is mightier than her love. Oh, Catharine, Catharine, fearest thou death so much that thou canst on that account deny thy love?

With desperate haste he drew out his portfolio. I will compel her to look at me, to think of me, to remember her oath, thought he. Woe to her, if she does not fulfill it—if she gives me not the rosette which she promised me with so solemn a vow. If she does it not, then I will break this dreadful silence, and before her King, and before her Court, accuse her of treachery to her love. Then, at least, she will not be able to cast me off; for we shall mount the scaffold together.

Does my exalted Queen allow me to begin? asked he aloud, wholly forgetting that the King had already given him the order to do so, and that it was *he* only who could grant such a permission.

Catharine looked at him in astonishment. Then her glance fell on Lady Jane Douglas, who was gazing over at her with an imploring expression. The Queen smiled; for she now remembered that it was Jane's beloved who had spoken to her, and that she had promised the poor young girl to raise again the dejected Earl of Surrey and to be gracious to him.

Jane is right, thought she; he appears to be deeply depressed and suffering. Ah, it must be very painful to see those, whom one loves, suffering! I will, therefore, comply with Jane's request, for she says this might revive the Earl.

With a smile she bowed to the Earl. I beg you, said she, to lend our festival its fairest ornament,—to adorn it with the fragrant flowers of your poesy. You see we are all burning with desire to hear your verses.

The King shook with rage; and a crushing word was already poised upon his lip. But he restrained himself. He wanted to have proofs first; he wanted to see them not merely accused, but doomed also; and for that he needed proofs of their guilt.

Henry Howard now approached the throne of the royal pair, and with beaming looks, with animated countenance, with a voice trembling with emotion, he read his love songs to the fair Geraldine.

A murmur of applause arose when he had read his first sonnet. The King only looked gloomily with fixed eyes; the Queen alone remained uninterested and cold.

She is a complete actress, thought Henry Howard in the madness of his pain. Not a muscle of her face stirs; and yet this sonnet must remind her of the fairest and most sacred moment of our love.

The Queen remained unmoved and cold. But had Henry Howard looked at Lady Jane Douglas, he would have seen how she turned pale and blushed; how she smiled with rapture, and how, nevertheless, her eyes filled with tears.

Earl Surrey, however, saw nothing but the Queen; and the sight of her made him tremble with rage and pain. His eyes darted lightning; his countenance glowed with passion; his whole being was in desperate, enthusiastic excitement. At that moment he would have gladly breathed out his life at Geraldine's feet, if she would only recognize him—if she would only have the courage to call him her beloved.

But her smiling calmness, her friendly coolness, brought him to despair.

He crumpled the paper in his hand; the letters danced before his eyes; he could read no more.

But he would not remain mute, either. Like the dying swan, he would breathe out his pain in a last song, and give sound and words to his despair and his agony. He could no longer read; but he improvised.

Like a glowing stream of lava, the words flowed from his lips; in fiery dithyrambic, in impasssioned hymns, he poured forth his love and pain. The genius of poesy hovered over him and lighted up his noble and thoughtful brow.

He was radiantly beautiful in his enthusiasm; and even the Queen felt herself carried away by his words.

His plaints of love, his longing pains, his rapture and his sad fancies found an echo in her heart.

She understood him; for she felt the same joy, the same sorrow and the same rapture; only she did not feel all this for him.

But, as we have said, he enthused her; the current of his passion carried her away. She wept at his laments; she smiled at his hymns of joy.

When Henry Howard at length ceased, profound silence reigned in the vast and brilliant royal hall.

All faces betrayed deep emotion; and this universal silence was the poet's fairest triumph; for it showed that even envy and jealousy were dumb, and that scorn itself could find no words.

A momentary pause ensued; it resembled that sultry, ominous stillness which is wont to precede the bursting of a tempest; when nature stops a moment in breathless stillness, to gather strength for the uproar of the storm.

It was a significant, an awful pause; but only a few understood its meaning.

Lady Jane leant against the wall completely shattered and breathless. She felt that the sword was hanging over their heads, and that it would destroy *her* if it struck her beloved.

Earl Douglas and the Bishop of Winchester had involuntarily drawn near each other, and stood there hand in hand, united for this unholy struggle; while John Heywood had crept behind the King's throne, and in his sarcastic manner whispered in his ear some epigrams, that made the King smile in spite of himself.

But now the Queen arose from her seat and beckoned Henry Howard nearer to her.

My Lord, said she almost with solemnity, as a queen and as a woman I thank you for the noble and sublime lyrics which you have composed in honor of a woman! And for that the grace of my King has exalted me to be the first woman in England, it becomes me, in the name of all women, to return you my thanks. To the poet is due a reward other than that of the warrior. To the victor on the battle-field is awarded a

laurel crown! But you have gained a victory not less glorious, for you have conquered hearts! We acknowledge ourselves vanquished, and in the name of all these noble women, I proclaim you their Knight! In token of which, accept this rosette, my Lord! It entitles you to wear the Queen's colors; it lays you under obligation to be the Knight of all women!

She loosened the rosette from her shoulder and handed it to the Earl.

He had sunk on one knee before her, and already extended his hand to receive this precious and coveted pledge.

But at this moment the King arose, and, with an imperious gesture, held back the Queen's hand.

Allow me, my Lady, said he in a voice quivering with rage. Allow me first to examine this rosette, and convince myself that it is enough worth to be presented to the noble Earl, as his sole reward. Let me see this rosette.

Catharine looked with astonishment into that face convulsed with pas sion and fury, but without hesitation she handed him the rosette.

We are lost! murmured Earl Surrey; while Earl Douglas and Gardiner exchanged with each other looks of triumph; and Jane Douglas murmured in her trembling heart prayers of anxiety and dread, scarcely hearing the malicious and exultant words which the Duchess of Richmond was whispering in her ear.

The King held the rosette in his hand and examined it. But his hands trembled so much that he was unable to unfasten the clasp which held it together.

He, therefore, handed it to John Heywood. These diamonds are poor, said he in a curt dry tone. Unfasten the clasp, fool; we will replace it with this pin here. Then will the present gain for the Earl a double value; for it will come at the same time from me and from the Queen.

How gracious you are to-day, said John Heywood smiling—As gracious as the cat, that plays a little longer with the mouse before she devours it.

Unfasten the clasp! exclaimed the King in a thundering voice, no longer able to conceal his rage. Slowly John Heywood unfastened the clasp from the ribbon. He did it with intentional slowness and deliberation; he let the King see all of his movements, every turn of his fingers; and it delighted him to hold those who had woven this plot, in dreadful suspense and expectation.

Whilst he appeared perfectly innocent and unembarrassed, his keen piercing glance ran over the whole assembly; and he noticed well the trembling impatience of Gardiner and Earl Douglas; and it did not escape him how pale Lady Jane was, and how full of expectation the intent features of the Duchess of Richmond.

They are the ones with whom this conspiracy originated, said John Heywood to himself. But I will keep silence till I can one day convict them.

There! here is the clasp! said he then aloud to the King. It stuck as tightly in the ribbon, as malice in the heart of priests and courtiers!

The King snatched the ribbon out of his hand, and examined it by drawing it through his fingers.

Nothing! nothing at all! said he gnashing his teeth; and now, deceived in his expectations and suppositions, he could no longer muster strength to withstand that roaring torrent of wrath which overflowed his heart.—The tiger was again aroused in him; he had calmly waited for the moment when the promised prey would be brought to him; now, when it seemed to be escaping him, his savage and cruel disposition started up within him. The tiger panted and thirsted for blood; and that he was not to get it, made him raging with fury.

With a wild movement he threw the rosette on the ground, and raised his arm menacingly towards Henry Howard.

Dare not to touch that rosette, cried he in a voice of thunder, before you have exculpated yourself from the guilt of which you are accused.

Earl Surrey looked him steadily and boldly in the eye. Have I been accused then? asked he. Then I demand first of all, that I be confronted with my accusers, and that my fault be named!

Ha, traitor! Do you dare to brave me? yelled the King. stamping furiously with his foot. Well now, I will be your accuser, and I will be your judge!

And surely, my King and husband, you will be a righteous judge, said Catharine, as she inclined imploringly towards the King and grasped his hand. You will not condemn the noble Earl Surrey without having heard him; and if you find him guiltless, you will punish his accusers.

But this intercession of the Queen made the King raging. He threw her hand from him, and gazed at her with looks of such flaming wrath, that she involuntarily trembled.

Traitoress yourself! yelled he wildly. Speak not of innocence—you who are yourself guilty; and before you dare defend the Earl, defend yourself!

Catharine rose from her seat and looked with flashing eyes into the King's face blazing with wrath. King Henry of England, said she solemnly, you have openly, before your whole Court, accused your Queen of a crime. I now demand that you name it!

She was of wondrous beauty in her proud bold bearing; in her imposing, majestic tranquility.

The decisive moment had come; and she was conscious that her life and her future were struggling with death for the victory.

She looked over to Thomas Seymour, and their eyes met. She saw how he laid his hand on his sword, and nodded to her a smiling greeting.

He will defend me; and before he will suffer me to be dragged to the Tower, he himself will plunge his sword into my breast! thought she, and a joyous, triumphant assurance filled her whole heart.

She saw nothing but him who had sworn to die with her when the decisive moment came. She looked with a smile on that blade which

he had already half drawn from its scabbard; and she hailed it asa dear, long yearned-for friend.

She saw not that Henry Howard also had laid his hand on his sword; that he, too, was ready for her defence, firmly resolved to slay the King himself, before his mouth uttered the sentence of death over the Queen.

But Lady Jane Douglas saw it. She understood how to read the Earl's countenance; she felt that he was ready to go to death for his beloved; and it filled her heart at once with woe and rapture.

She, too, was now firmly resolved to follow only her heart and her love; and forgetting all else besides these, she hastened forwards, and was now standing by Henry Howard.

Be prudent, Earl Surrey, said she in a low whisper. Take your hand from your sword. The Queen, by my mouth, commands you to do so!

Henry Howard looked at her astonished and surprised; but he let his hand slip from the hilt of his sword, and again looked towards the Queen.

She had repeated her demand; she had once more demanded of the King—who, speechless and completely overcome with anger, had fallen back into his seat—to name the crime of which she was accused.

Now then, my Queen; you demand it, and you shall hear it, cried he. You want to know the crime of which you are accused? Answer me, then, my Lady! They accuse you of not always staying at night in your sleeping-room. It is alleged that you sometimes leave it for many hours; and that none of your women accompanied you, when you glided through the corridors and up the secret stairs to the lonely tower, in which was waiting for you your lover, who at the same time entered the tower through the small street-door.

He knows all! muttered Henry Howard; and again he laid his hand on his sword, and was about to approach the Queen.

Lady Jane held him back. Wait for the issue, said she. There is still time to die!

He knows all! thought the Queen also; and now she felt within herself the daring courage to risk all, that at least she might not stand there a traitoress in the eyes of her lover.

He shall not believe that I have been untrue to him, thought she. I will tell all—confess all, that *he* may know why I went and whither.

Now answer, my Lady Catharine, thundered the King. Answer; and tell me whether you have been falsely accused. Is it true that you, eight days ago, in the night between Monday and Tuesday, left your sleeping-room at the hour of midnight and went secretly to the lonely tower? Is it true that you received there a man who is your lover?

The Queen looked at him in angry pride. Henry, Henry, woe to you that you dare thus insult your own wife, cried she.

Answer me! You were not on that night in your sleeping-room?

No! said Catharine with dignified composure. I was not there.

The King sank back in his seat, and a real roar of fury sounded from

his lips. It made the women turn pale, and even the men felt themselves tremble.

Catharine alone had not heeded it at all; she alone had heard nothing save that cry of amazement which Thomas Seymour uttered; and she saw only the angry and upbraiding looks which he threw across at her.

She answered these looks with a friendly and confident smile, and pressed both her hands to her heart as she looked at him.

I will justify myself before him at least, thought she.

The King had recovered from his first shock. He again raised himself up, and his countenance now exhibited a fearful, threatening coolness.

You confess, then, asked he, that you were not in your sleeping-room on that night?

I have already said so! exclaimed Catharine impatiently.

The King compressed his lips so violently that they bled. And a man was with you? asked he. A man with whom you made an assignation, and whom you received in the lonely tower?

A man was with me. But I did not receive him in the lonely tower; and it was no assignation.

Who was that man? yelled the King. Answer me! Tell me his name, if you do not want me to strangle you myself!

King Henry, I fear death no longer! said Catharine, with a contemptuous smile.

Who was that man? Tell me his name! yelled the King once more.

The Queen raised herself more proudly, and her defiant look ran over the whole assembly.

The man, said she solemnly, who was with me on that night—he is named——

He is named John Heywood! said this individual, as he seriously and proudly walked forward from behind the King's throne! Yes, Henry, your brother, the fool John Heywood, had on that night the proud honor of accompanying your consort on her holy errand; but, I assure you, that he was less like the King, than the King is just now like the fool.

A murmur of surprise ran through the assembly. The King leant back in his royal seat speechless.

And now, King Henry, said Catharine calmly—now I will tell you whither I went with John Heywood on that night!

She was silent, and for a moment leant back on her seat. She felt that the looks of all were directed to her; she heard the King's wrathful groan; she felt her lover's flashing, reproachful glances; she saw the derisive smile of those haughty ladies, who had never forgiven her—that she, from a simple Baroness, had become Queen. But all this made her only still more courageous and bolder.

She had arrived at the turning point of her life, where she must risk everything to avoid sinking into the abyss.

But Lady Jane also had arrived at such a decisive moment of her existence. She, too, said to herself: I must at this hour risk all, if I do not want to lose all. She saw Henry Howard's pale, expectant face. She knew if the Queen now spoke, the whole web of their conspiracy would be revealed to him.

She must, therefore, anticipate the Queen. She must warn Henry Howard.

Fear nothing! whispered she to him. We were prepared for that. I have put into her hand the means of escape!

Will you now at last speak? exclaimed the King, quivering with impatience and rage. Will you at last tell us where you were on that night?

I will tell! exclaimed Catharine, rising up again boldly and resolutely. But woe be to those who drive me to this! For I tell you beforehand, from the accused I will become an accuser who demands justice, if not before the throne of the King of England, yet before the throne of the Lord of all Kings! King Henry of England, do you ask me whither I went on that night with John Heywood? I might, perhaps, as your Queen and consort, demand that you put this question to me, not before so many witnesses, but in the quiet of our chamber; but you seek publicity, and I do not shun it. Well, hear the truth then—all of you!—On that night, between Monday and Tuesday, I was not in my sleeping apartment, because I had a grave and sacred duty to perform; because a dying woman called on me for help and pity! Would you know, my lord and husband, who this dying woman was? It was Anne Askew!

Anne Askew! exclaimed the King in astonishment; and his countenance exhibited a less wrathful expression.

Anne Askew! muttered the others; and John Heywood very well saw how Bishop Gardiner's brow darkened, and how Chancellor Wriothesley turned pale and cast down his eyes.

Yes, I was with Anne Askew! continued the Queen—with Anne Askew, whom those pious and wise lords yonder had condemned, not so much on account of her faith, but because they knew that I loved her. Anne Askew was to die, because Catharine Parr loved her! She was to go to the stake, that my heart also might burn with fiery pains! And because it was so, I was obliged to risk everything in order to save her. Oh, my King, say yourself, did I not owe it to this poor girl to try everything in order to save her? On my account she was to suffer these tortures. For they had shamefully stolen from me a letter which Anne Askew, in the distress of her heart, had addressed to me; and they showed this letter to you, in order to cast suspicion on me and accuse me to you. But your noble heart repelled the suspicion; and now their wrath fell again on Anne Askew, and she must suffer, because they did not find me punishable. She must atone for having dared to write to me. They worked matters with you so that she was put to the rack. But when my husband gave way to their urging, yet the noble King re-

mained still awake in him. "Go," said he, "rack her and kill her; but see first, whether she will not recant."

Henry looked astonished into her noble and defiant face. Do you know that? asked he. And yet we were alone, and no human being present Who could tell you that?

When man is no longer able to help, then God undertakes! said Catharine solemnly. It was God who commanded me to go to Anne Askew, and try whether I could save her. And I went. But though the wife of a noble and great King, I am still but a weak and timid woman. I was afraid to tread this gloomy and dangerous path alone; I needed a strong, manly arm to lean upon; and so John Heywood lent me his.

And you were really with Anne Askew, interposed the King thoughtfully—with that hardened sinner, who despised mercy, and in the stubborness of her soul would not be a partaker of the pardon that I offered her?

My lord and husband, said the Queen with tears in her eyes, she whom you have just accused, stands even now before the throne of the Lord, and has received from her God the forgiveness of her sins! Therefore, do you likewise pardon her; and may the flames of the stake, to which yesterday the noble virgin body of this girl was bound, have consumed also the wrath and hatred which had been kindled in your heart against her. Anne Askew passed away like a saint; for she forgave all her enemies and blessed her tormenters.

Anne Askew was a damnable sinner, who dared resist the command of her lord and King! interrupted Bishop Gardiner, looking daggers at her.

And dare you maintain, my Lord, that you at that time fulfilled the commands of your royal master simply and exactly? asked Catharine. Did you keep within them with respect to Anne Askew? No! I say; for the King had not ordered you to torture her; he had not bidden you to lacerate in blasphemous wrath a noble human form, and distort that likeness of God into a horrible caricature. And that, my Lord, you did! Before God and your King, I accuse you of it—I, the Queen! For you now know, my lord and husband, I was there when Anne Askew was racked. I saw her agony; and John Heywood saw it with me.

The eyes of all were now directed inquiringly to the King, of whose ferocity and choler every one now expected a violent outbreak.

But this time they were mistaken. The King was so well satisfied to find his consort clear of the crime laid to her charge, that he willingly forgave her for having committed a crime of less weighty character. Besides, it filled him with respect to see his consort confronting her accusers so boldly and proudly; and he felt towards them just as burning wrath and hatred, as he had before harbored against the Queen. He was pleased, that the malignant and persistent persecutors of his fair and proud wife should now be humbled by her before the eyes of all his Court.

Therefore he looked at her with an imperceptible smile, and said with deep interest: But how could this happen, my lady? By what path did you get thither?

That is an inquiry which any one except the King is authorized to make! King Henry alone knows the way that I went! said Catharine with a slight smile.

John Heywood, who was still standing behind the King's throne, now bent down close to Henry's ear, and spoke with him a long time in a quick, low tone.

The King listened to him attentively; then he murmured so loud that the bystanders could very well understand him: By God, she is a spirited and brave woman; and we should be obliged to confess that, even were she not our Queen!

Continue, my Lady! said he then aloud, turning to the Queen with a gracious look. Relate to me, Catharine, what saw you then in the torture-chamber?

Oh, my King and lord, it horrifies me only to think of it, cried she shuddering and turning pale. I saw a poor young woman, who writhed in fearful agony, and whose staring eyes were raised in mute supplication to heaven. She did not beg her tormenters for mercy; she wanted from them no compassion and no pity; she did not scream and whine from the pain, though her limbs cracked and her flesh snapped apart like glass; she raised her clasped hands to God, and her lips murmured low prayers, which, perhaps, made the angels of heaven weep, but were not able to touch the hearts of her tormenters. You had ordered her to be racked, if she would not retract. They did not ask her whether she would do this—they racked her. But her soul was strong and full of courage; and under the tortures of the executioner, her lips remained mute. Let theologians say and determine whether Anne Askew's faith was a false one; but this they will not dare deny: that in the noble enthusiasm of this faith, she was a heroine who at least did not deny her God. At length, worn out with so much useless exertion, the assistant executioners discontinued their bloody work, to rest from the tortures which they had prepared for Anne Askew. The Lieutenant of the Tower declared the work of the rack ended. The highest degrees had been applied, and they had proved powerless; cruelty was obliged to acknowledge itself conquered. But the priests of the Church, with savage vehemence, demanded that she should be racked once more. Dare deny that, ye lords, whom I behold standing there opposite with faces pale as death. Yes, my King, the servants of the rack refused to obey the servants of God; for in the hearts of the hangman's drudges there was more pity than in the hearts of the priests! And when they refused to proceed in their bloody work, and when the Lieutenant of the Tower, in virtue of the existing law, declared the racking at an end, then I saw one of the first ministers of our Church throw aside his sacred garments; then the priest of God transformed himself into a hangman's drudge, who, with blood-thirsty delight, lacer-

ated anew the noble mangled body of the young girl, and more cruel than the attendants of the rack, unsparingly broke and dislocated the limbs, which *they* had only squeezed in their screws.*—Excuse me, my King, from sketching this scene of horror still farther! Horrified and trembling, I fled from that frightful place, and returned to my room shattered, and sad at heart.

Catharine ceased, exhausted, and sank back into her seat.

A breathless stillness reigned around. All faces were pale and colorless. Gardiner and Wriothesley stood with their eyes fixed gloomy and defiant, expecting that the King's wrath would crush and destroy them.

But the King scarcely thought of them; he thought only of his fair young Queen, whose boldness inspired him with respect, and whose innocence and purity filled him with a proud and blissful joy.

He was, therefore, very much inclined to forgive those, who in reality had committed no offence farther than this, that they had carried out a little too literally and strictly the orders of their master.

A long pause had ensued—a pause full of expectation and anxiety for all who were assembled in the hall. Only Catharine reclined calmly in her chair, and with beaming eyes looked across to Thomas Seymour, whose handsome countenance betrayed to her the gratification and satisfaction which he felt at this clearing up of her mysterious night wandering.

At last the King arose, and bowing low before his consort, said in a loud, full-toned voice: I have deeply and bitterly injured you, my noble wife; and as I publicly accused you, I will also publicly ask your forgiveness! You have a right to be angry with me; for it behooved me above all, to believe with unshaken firmness in the truth and honor of my wife. My lady, you have made a brilliant vindication of yourself; and, I, the King, first of all bow before you, and beg that you may forgive me and impose some penance.

Leave it to me, Queen, to impose a penance on this repentant sinner! cried John Heywood gaily. Your Majesty is much too magnanimous, much too timid, to treat him as roughly as my brother King Henry deserves. Leave it to me then to punish him; for only the fool is wise enough to punish the King after his deserts.

Catharine nodded to him with a grateful smile. She comprehended perfectly John Heywood's delicacy and nice tact; she apprehended that he wanted by a joke to relieve her from her painful situation, and put an end to the King's public acknowledgement, which at the same time must turn to her bitter reproach—bitter, though it were only self-reproach.

Well, said she smiling, what punishment then will you impose upon the King?

The punishment of recognizing the fool as his equal!

God is my witness, that I do so! exclaimed the King almost solemn-

* Burnet's History of the Reformation: vol. 1, page 132.

ly. Fools we are, one and all, and we fall short of the renown which we have before men.

But my sentence is not yet complete, brother! continued John Heywood. I furthermore give sentence, that you also forthwith allow me to recite my poem to you, and that you open your ears in order to hear what John Heywood, the wise, has indited!

You have then fulfilled my command and composed a new interlude? cried the King vivaciously.

No interlude, but a wholly novel, comical affair—a play full of lampoons and jokes, at which your eyes are to overflow, yet not with weeping, but with laughter. To the right noble Earl of Surrey belongs the proud honor of having presented to our happy England her first sonnets. Well now, I also will give her something new. I present her the first comedy; and as he sings the beauty of his Geraldine, so I celebrate the fame of Gammer Gurton's sewing needle—Gammer Gurton's needle, so my piece is called; and you, King Henry, shall listen to it as a punishment for your sins!

I will do so, cried the King cheerfully, provided you permit it, Kate! But before I do so, I make also one more condition. A condition, for you, Queen! Kate, you have disdained to impose a penance on me, but grant me at least the pleasure of being allowed to fulfil some wish of yours! Make me a request, that I may grant it you!

Well then, my lord and King, said Catharine with a charming smile, I beg you to think no more of the incidents of this day, and to forgive those, whom I accused only because their accusation was my vindication. They who brought charges against me, have in this hour felt contrition for their own fault. Let that suffice, King, and forgive them, as I do!

You are ever a noble and great woman, Kate! cried the King; and as his glance swept over towards Gardiner with an almost contemptuous expression, he continued: Your request is granted! But woe to them who shall dare accuse you again. And have you nothing farther to demand, Kate?

Nay, one thing more, my lord and husband!—She leant nearer to the King's ear and whispered: They have also accused your noblest and most faithful servant; they have accused Cranmer. Condemn him not, King, without having heard him; and if I may beg a favor of you, it is this: Talk with Cranmer yourself. Tell him of what they have charged him, and hear his vindication.

It shall be so, Kate, said the King, and you shall be present! But let this be a secret between us, Kate, and we will carry it out in perfect silence. And now then, John Heywood, let us hear your composition; and woe to you, if it does not accomplish what you promised—if it does not make us laugh. For you well know, that you then are inevitably exposed to the rods of our injured ladies.

They shall have leave to whip me to death, if I do not make you laugh! cried John Heywood gaily, as he drew out his manuscript.

Soon the hall rung again with loud laughter; and in the universal merriment, no one observed that Bishop Gardiner and Earl Douglas slipped quietly away.

In the ante-room without, they stopped and looked at each other, long and silently; their countenances expressed the wrath and bitterness which filled them within; and they understood this mute language of their features.

She must die! said Gardiner in a short and quick tone. She has for once escaped from our snares; we will tie them all the tighter next time!

And I already hold in my hand the threads out of which we will form these snares, said Earl Douglas. We have to-day falsely accused her of a love-affair. When we do it again, we shall speak the truth. Did you see the looks that Catharine exchanged with the heretical Earl Sudly, Thomas Seymour?

I saw them, Earl!

For these looks she will die, my Lord. The Queen loves Thomas Seymour; and this love will be her death.

Amen! said Bishop Gardiner solemnly, as he raised his eyes devoutly to heaven. Amen! The Queen has grievously and bitterly injured us to-day; she has insulted and abused us before all the Court. We will requite her for it some day! The torture-chamber, which she has depicted in such lively colors, may yet one day open for her, too—not that she may behold another's agonies, but that she may suffer agonies herself. We shall one day avenge ourselves!

CHAPTER V.

REVENGE.

Miss Holland, the beautiful and much admired mistress of the Duke of Norfolk, was alone in her magnificently adorned boudoir. It was the hour when ordinarily the Duke was wont to be with her; for this reason she was charmingly attired, and had wrapped herself in that light and voluptuous *negligée* which the Duke so much liked, because it set off to so much advantage the splendid form of his friend.

But to-day the expected one did not make his appearance; in his stead, his valet had just come and brought the fair Miss a note from his master. This note she was holding in her hand, while with passionate violence she now walked up and down her boudoir. A glowing crimson blazed upon her cheeks, and her large, haughty eyes darted wild flashes of wrath.

She was disdained—she, Lady Holland, was forced to endure the disgrace of being dismissed by her lover.

There, there in that letter which she held in her hand, and which burned her fingers like red-hot iron—there it stood in black and white, that he would see her no more; that he renounced her love; that he released her.

Her whole frame shook as she thought of this. It was not the anguish of a loving heart which made her tremble; it was the wounded pride of the woman.

He had abandoned her. Her beauty, her youth no longer had the power to enchain him—the man with white hairs and withered features.

He had written her, that he was satiated and weary, not of her, but only of love in general; that his heart had become old and withered like his face; and that there was still in his breast no more room for love, but only for ambition.

Was not that a revolting, an unheard of outrage: To abandon the finest woman in England for the sake of empty, cold, stern ambition?

She opened the letter once more. Once more she read that place. Then grinding her teeth, she said with tears of anger in her eyes: He shall pay me for this! I will take vengeance for this insult!

She thrust the letter into her bosom, and touched the silver bell.

Have my carriage brought round! was her order to the servant who entered; and he withdrew in silence.

I will avenge myself! muttered she, as with trembling hands she wrapped herself in the large Turkish shawl. I will avenge myself; and by the eternal God, it shall be a bloody and swift vengeance. I will show him, that I, too, am ambitious, and that my pride is not to be humbled. He says he will forget me; Oh, I will compel him to think of me, even though it be only to curse me!

With hasty step she sped through the glittering apartments, which the liberality of her lover had furnished so magnificently, and descended to the carriage standing ready for her.

To the Duchess of Norfolk's! said she to the footman standing at the door of the carriage, as she entered it.

The servant looked at her in astonishment and inquiringly.

To the *Duke* of Norfolk; is it not, my Lady?

No indeed, to the Duchess! cried she with a frown, as she leant back on the cushion.

After a short time, the carriage drew up before the palace of the Duchess, and with haughty tread and commanding air she passed through the porch.

Announce me to the Duchess immediately, was her order to the lackey who was hurrying to meet her.

Your name, my Lady?

Miss Arabella Holland.

The servant stepped back, and stared at her in surprise. Miss Arabella Holland? And you order me to announce you to the Duchess?

A contemptuous smile played a moment about the thin lips of the beautiful Miss. I see you know me, said she; and you wonder a little to see me here. Wonder as much as you please, good friend; only conduct me immediately to the Duchess.

I doubt whether her ladyship receives calls to day, stammered the servant hesitatingly.

Then go and ask; and that I may learn her answer as soon as possible, I will accompany you.

With a commanding air, she motioned to the servant to go before her; and he could not summon up courage to gainsay this proud beauty.

In silence they traversed the suite of stately apartments, and at length stood before a door hung with tapestry.

I must beg you to wait here a moment, my Lady, so that I can announce you to the Duchess, who is there in her boudoir.

No indeed; I will assume that office myself, said Miss Holland, as with strong hand she pushed back the servant and opened the door.

The Duchess was sitting at her writing table, her back turned to the door through which Arabella had entered. She did not turn round; perhaps she had not heard the door open. She continued quietly writing.

Miss Arabella Holland with stately step crossed the room, and now stood close to the chair of the Duchess.

Duchess, I would like to speak with you, said she cooly and calmly.

The Duchess uttered a cry and looked up. Miss Holland! cried she amazed, and hastily rising. Miss Holland! you here with me, in my house! What do you want here? How dare you cross my threshold?

I s e you still hate me, my lady! said Arabella smiling. You have not yet forgiven me that the Duke, your husband, found more delight in my young, handsome face, than in yours now growing old; that my sprightly, wanton disposition pleased him better than your cold, stately air.

The Duchess turned pale with rage; and her eyes darted lightning. Silence, you shameless creature, silence, or I will call my servants to rid me of you!

You will not call them; for I have come to be reconciled with you, and to offer you peace.

Peace with you! sneered the Duchess. Peace with that shameless woman who stole from me my husband, the father of my children?—who loaded me with the disgrace of standing before the whole world, as a repudiated and despised wife, and of suffering myself to be compared with you, that the world might decide which of us two was worthier of his love? Peace with you, Miss Holland?—with the impudent strumpet who squanders my husband's means in lavish luxury, and, with scoffing boldness, robs my children of their lawful property?

It is true, the Duke is very generous, said Miss Holland composedly. He loaded me with diamonds and gold.

And meanwhile I was doomed almost to suffer want, said the Duchess grinding her teeth.

Want of love, it may be, my Lady, but not want of money; for you are very magnificently fitted up; and every one knows that the Duchess of Norfolk is rich enough to be able to spare the trifles that her husband laid at my feet. By Heaven, my Lady, I would not have deemed it worth the trouble to stoop for them, if I had not seen among these trifles his heart. The heart of a man is well worth a woman's stooping for! You had neglected that, my Lady, and therefore you lost your husband's heart. I picked it up. That is all. Why will you make a crime of that?

That is enough! cried the Duchess. It does not become me to dispute with you; I desire only to know what gave you the courage to come to me?

My Lady, do you hate me only? Or do you also hate the Duke, your husband?

She asks me whether I hate him! cried the Duchess with a wild, scornful laugh. Yes, Miss Holland, yes! I hate him as ardently as I despise you. I hate him so much that I would give my whole estate—aye, years of my life—if I could punish him for the disgrace he has put upon me.

Then, my Lady, we shall soon understand each other; for I too hate him, said Miss Holland, quietly seating herself on the velvet divan, and smiling as she observed the speechless astonishment of the Duchess.

Yes, my Lady, I hate him; and without doubt still more ardently, still more intensely than you yourself; for I am young and fiery; you are old, and have always managed to preserve a cool heart.

The Duchess was convulsed with rage; but silently, and with an effort, she gulphed down the drop of wormwood, which her wicked rival mingled in the cup of joy which she presented to her.

You do hate him, Miss Holland? asked she joyfully.

I hate him, and I have come to league myself with you against him. He is a traitor, a perfidious wretch, a perjurer. I will take vengeance for my disgrace!

Ah, has he then deserted you also?

He has deserted me also.

Well then, God be praised! cried the Duchess, and her face beamed with joy. God is great and just; and he has punished you with the same weapons with which you sinned! For your sake, he deserted me; and for the sake of another woman, he forsakes you.

Not so, my Lady! said Miss Holland proudly. A woman like me is not forsaken on account of a woman; and he who loves me will love no other after me. There, read his letter!

She handed the Duchess her husband's letter.

And what do you want to do now? asked the Duchess after she had read it.

I will have revenge, my Lady! He says he no longer has a heart to love; well now, we will so manage, that he may no longer have a head to think. Will you be my ally, my Lady?

I will.

And I also will be, said the Duchess of Richmond, who just then opened the door and came out of the adjoining room.

Not a word of this entire conversation had escaped her, and she very well understood that the question was not about some petty vengeance, but her father's head. She knew that Miss Holland was not a woman that, when irritated, pricked with a pin; but one that grasped the dagger to strike her enemy a mortal blow.

Yes, I too will be your ally, cried the Duchess of Richmond; we have all three been outraged by the same man. Let, then, our revenge be a common one. The father has insulted you; the son, me. Well then, I will help you to strike the father, if you in return will assist me to destroy the son.

I will assist you, said Arabella smiling; for I also hate the haughty Earl of Surrey, who prides himself on his virtue, as if it were a golden fleece which God himself had stuck on his breast. I hate him; for he never meets me but with proud disregard; and he alone is to blame for his father's faithlessness.

I was present when with tears he besought the Duke, our father, to free himself from your fetters, and give up this shameful and disgraceful connexion with you, said the young Duchess.

Arabella answered nothing. But she pressed her hands firmly together, and a slight pallor overspread her cheeks.

And why are you angry with your brother? asked the old Duchess thoughtfully.

Why am I angry with him, do you ask, my mother? I am not angry with him; but I execrate him, and I have sworn to myself never to rest till I have avenged myself. My happiness, my heart, and my future, lay in his hands; and he has remorselessly trodden under his haughty feet these—his sister's precious treasures. It lay with him to make me the wife of the man I love; and he has not done it, though I lay at his feet weeping and wringing my hands.

But it was a great sacrifice that you demanded, said her mother. He had to give his hand to a woman he did not love, so that you might be Thomas Seymour's wife.

Mother, you defend him; and yet he it is that blames you daily; and but yesterday it seemed to him perfectly right and natural that the Duke had forsaken you, our mother.

Did he do that? inquired the Duchess vehemently. Well now, as he has forgotten that I am his mother, so will I forget that he is my son. I am your ally! Revenge for our injured hearts! Vengeance on father and son!

She held out both hands, and the two young women laid their hands in hers.

Vengeance on father and son! repeated they both; and their eyes flashed, and crimson now mantled their cheeks.

I am tired of living like a hermit in my palace, and of being ban-

ished from Court by the fear that I may encounter my husband there.

You shall encounter him there no more, said her daughter laconically.

They shall not laugh and jeer at me, cried Arabella. And when they learn that he has forsaken me, they shall also know, how I have avenged myself for it.

Thomas Seymour can never become my husband, so long as Henry Howard lives; for he has mortally offended him, as Henry has rejected the hand of his sister. Perhaps I may become his wife, if Henry Howard is no more, said the young Duchess. So let us consider. How shall we begin, so as to strike them surely and certainly?

When three women are agreed, they may well be certain of their success, said Arabella shrugging her shoulders. We live—God be praised for it—under a noble and high-minded King, who beholds the blood of his subjects with as much pleasure as he does the crimson of his royal mantle, and who has never yet shrunk back when a death warrant was to be signed.

But this time he will shrink back, said the old Duchess. He will not dare to rob the noblest and most powerful family of his kingdom of its head.

That very risk will stimulate him, said the Duchess of Richmond laughing; and the more difficult it is to bring down these heads, so much the more impatiently will he hanker after it. The King hates them both; and he will thank us, if we change his hatred into retributive justice.

Then let us accuse both of high treason! cried Arabella. The Duke is a traitor; for I will and can swear that he has often enough called the King a blood-thirsty tiger, a relentless tyrant, a man without truth and without faith, although he coquettishly pretends to be the fountain and rock of all faith.

If he has said that, and you heard him, you are in duty bound to communicate it to the King, if you do not want to be a traitoress yourself, exclaimed the young Duchess solemnly.

And have you not noticed, that the Duke has for some time borne the same coat of arms as the King? asked the Duchess of Norfolk. It is not enough for his haughty and ambitious spirit to be the first servant of this land; he strives to be lord and king of it.

Tell that to the King, and by to-morrow the head of the traitor falls. For the King is as jealous of his kingdom as ever a woman was of her lover. Tell him that the Duke bears his coat of arms, and his destruction is certain.

I will tell him so, daughter.

We are sure of the father, but what have we for the son?

A sure and infallible means, that will as certainly despatch him into eternity as the hunter's tiny bullet slays the proudest stag. Henry loves the Queen; and I will furnish the King proof of that, said the young Duchess.

Then let us go to the King! cried Arabella impetuously.

No, indeed! That would make a sensation, and might easily frustrate our whole plan, said the Duchess of Richmond. Let us first talk with Earl Douglas, and hear his advice. Come; every minute is precious! We owe it to our womanly honor to avenge ourselves. We cannot, and will not leave unpunished those who have despised our love, wounded our honor and trodden under foot the holiest ties of nature!

CHAPTER VI.

THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

The Princess Elizabeth was sitting in her room, melancholy and absorbed in thought. Her eyes were red with weeping; and she pressed her hand on her heart, as if she would repress its cry of anguish.

With a disconsolate, perplexed look she gazed around her chamber, and its solitude was doubly painful to her to-day. for it testified to her forsaken condition, to the disgrace that still rested on her. For were it not so, to-day would have been to the whole Court a day of rejoicing, of congratulations.

To-day was Elizabeth's birth-day; fourteen years ago to-day, Anne Boleyn's daughter had seen the light of this world.

Anne Boleyn's daughter! That was the secret of her seclusion. That was why none of the ladies and lords of the Court had remembered her birth-day; for that would have been at the same time a remembrance of Anne Boleyn, of Elizabeth's beautiful and unfortunate mother, who had been made to atone for her grandeur and prosperity by her death.

Moreover, the King had called his daughter Elizabeth a bastard, and solemnly declared her unworthy of succeeding to the throne.

Her birthday, therefore, was to Elizabeth only a day of humiliation and pain. Reclining on her divan, she thought of her despised and joyless past, of her desolate and inglorious future.

She was a Princess, and yet possessed not the rights of her birth; she was a young maiden, and yet doomed, in sad resignation, to renounce all all the delights and enjoyments of youth, and to condemn her passionate and ardent heart to the eternal sleep of death. For when the Infant of Spain sued for her hand, Henry the Eighth had declared that the bastard Elizabeth was unworthy of a princely husband. But in order to intimidate other suitors also, he had loudly and openly declared that no sub-

ject should dare be so presumptuous as to offer his hand to one of his royal daughters, and he who dared to solicit them in marriage should be punished as a traitor.

So Elizabeth was condemned to remain unmarried; and nevertheless she loved; and nevertheless she harbored only this one wish, to be the wife of her beloved, and to be able to exchange the proud title of Princess for the name of Countess Seymour.

Since she loved him, a new world, a new sun had arisen on her; and before the sweet and enchanting whispers of her love, even the proud and alluring voices of her ambition had to be silent. She no longer thought of it, that she would never be a queen; she was only troubled, that she could not be Seymour's wife.

She no longer wanted to rule, but she wanted to be happy. But her happiness reposed on him alone—on Thomas Seymour.

Such were her thoughts, as she was in her chamber on the morning of her birth day, alone and lonely; and her eyes reddened by tears, her painfully convulsed lips betrayed how much she had wept to-day; how much this young girl of fourteen years had already suffered.

But she would think no more about it; she would not allow the lurking, everywhere-prying, malicious and wicked courtiers the triumph of seeing the traces of her tears, and rejoicing at her pains and her humiliation. She was a proud and resolute soul; she would rather have died, than to have accepted the sympathy and pity of the courtiers.

I will work, said she. Work is the best balm for all pains.

And she took up the elaborate silk embroidery which she had begun for her poor, unfortunate friend, Anne of Cleves, Henry's divorced wife. But the work occupied only her fingers; not her thoughts.

She threw it aside and seized her books. She took Petrarch's Sonnets; and his love-plaints and griefs enchained and stirred her own love-sick heart.

With streaming tears, and yet smiling and full of sweet melancholy, Elizabeth read these noble and tender poems. It appeared to her as if Petrarch had only said what she herself so warmly felt. There were her thoughts, her griefs. He had said them in his language; she must now repeat them in her own. She seated herself, and with hands trembling with enthusiasm, fluttering breath, perfectly excited and glowing, in glad haste, she began a translation of Petrarch's first sonnet.*

A loud knock interrupted her; and in the hastily opened door now appeared the lovely form of the Queen.

The Queen! exclaimed Elizabeth with delight. Have you come to me at such an early morning hour?

And should I wait till evening to wish my Elizabeth happiness on her festival? Should I first let the sun go down on this day, which

* Elizabeth, who even as a girl of twelve years old spoke four languages, was very fond of composing verses, and of translating the poems of foreign authors. But she kept her skill in this respect very secret, and was always very angry if any one by chance saw one of her poems. After her death there were found among her papers many translations, specially of Petrarch's Sonnets, which were the work of her earliest youth.—Leti, vol. 1, page 150.

gave to England so noble and fair a Princess? asked Catharine. Or you thought, perhaps, I did not know that this was your birth-day, and that to-day my Elizabeth advances from the years of childood, as a proud maiden full of hope?

Full of hope? said Elizabeth sadly. Anne Boleyn's daughter has no hopes; and when you speak of my birth-day, you remind me at the same time of my despised birth!

It shall be despised no longer! cried Catharine, and, as she put her arm tenderly around Elizabeth's neck, she handed her a roll of parchment.

Take that, Elizabeth; and may this paper be to you the promise of a joyful and brilliant future! At my request the King has made this law, and he, therefore, granted me the pleasure of bringing it to you.

Elizabeth opened the parchment and read; and a radiant expression overspread her countenance.

Acknowledged! I am acknowledged! cried she. The disgrace of my birth is taken away! Elizabeth is no more a bastard—she is a royal Princess!

And she may some day be a queen! said Catharine smiling.

Oh, cried Elizabeth, it is not that which stirs me with such joy. But the disgrace of my birth is taken away; and I may freely hold up my head and name my mother's name! Now thou mayest sleep calmly in thy grave, for it is no longer dishonored! Anne Boleyn was no strumpet; she was King Henry's lawful wife, and Elizabeth is the King's legitimate daughter! I thank thee, my God—I thank thee!

And the young, passionate girl threw herself on her knees, and raised her hands and her eyes to heaven.

Spirit of my glorified mother, said she solemnly, I call thee! Come to me! Overshadow me with thy smile, and bless me with thy breath! Queen Anne of England, thy daughter is no longer a bastard, and no one dare venture more to insult her. Thou wert with me when I wept and suffered, my mother; and often in my disgrace and humiliation, it was as if I heard thy voice which whispered comfort to me; as if I saw thy heavenly eyes which poured peace and love into my breast! Oh, abide with me now also, my mother—now when my disgrace is taken away, abide with me in my prosperity; and guard my heart, that it may be kept pure from arrogance and pride, and remain humble in its joy! Anne Boleyn, they laid thy beautiful, innocent head upon the block; but this parchment sets upon it again the royal crown; and woe, woe to those who will now still dare insult thy memory!

She sprang from her knees and rushed to the wall opposite, on which was a large oil painting, which represented Elizabeth herself as a child playing with a dog.

Oh, mother, mother! said she. This picture was the last earthly thing on which thy looks rested; and to these painted lips of thy child thou gavest thy last kiss, which thy cruel hangmen would not allow to thy living child.

Oh let me sip up this last kiss from that spot; let me touch with my mouth the spot that thy lips have consecrated!

She bent down and kissed the picture.

And now come forth out of thy grave, my mother, said she solemnly. I have been obliged so long to hide, so long to veil thee. Now thou belongest to the world and to the light! The King has acknowledged me as his lawful daughter; he cannot refuse me to have a likeness of my mother in my room.

As she thus spoke, she pressed on a spring set in the broad gilt frame of the picture; and suddenly the picture was seen to move and slowly open like a door, so as to render visible another picture concealed beneath it, which represented the unfortunate Anne Boleyn in bridal attire, in the full splendor of her beauty, as Holbein had painted her, at the desire of her husband, the King.

How beautiful and angelic that countenance is! said Catharine stepping nearer. How innocent and pure those features! Poor Queen! Yet thine enemies succeeded in casting suspicion on thee and bringing thee to the scaffold. Oh, when I behold thee, I shudder; and my own future rises up before me like a threatening spectre. Who can believe himself safe and secure, when Anne Boleyn was not secure; when even she had to die a dishonorable death! Ah, do but believe me, Elizabeth, it is a melancholy lot to be Queen of England; and often indeed have I asked the morning whether I, as still Queen of England, shall greet the evening. But no—we will not talk of myself in this hour, but only of you, Elizabeth—of your future and of your fortune. May this document be acceptable to you and realize all the wishes that slumber in your bosom.

One great wish of mine it has fulfilled already, said Elizabeth, still occupied with the picture. It allows me to show my mother's likeness unveiled! That I could one day do so, was her last prayer and last wish, which she entrusted to John Heywood for me. To him she committed this picture. He alone knew the secret of it, and he has faithfully preserved it.

Oh, John Heywood is a trusty and true friend, said Catharine heartily; and it was he who assisted me in inclining the King to our plan and in persuading him to acknowledge you.

With an unutterable expression, Elizabeth presented both hands to her. I thank you for my honor, and the honor of my mother, said she; I will love you for it as a daughter; and never shall your enemies find with me an open ear and a willing heart. Let us two conclude with each other a league offensive and defensive! Let us keep true to each other; and the enemies of the one shall be the enemies of the other also. And where we see danger we will combat it in common; and we will watch over each other with a true sisterly eye, and warn one another whenever a chance flash brings to light an enemy, who is stealing along in the darkness, and wants with his dagger to assassinate us from behind.

So be it! said Catharine solemnly. We will remain inseparable, and true to one another, and love each other as sisters!

And as she imprinted a warm kiss on Elizabeth's lips, she continued: But now, Princess, direct your looks once more to that document, of which at first you read only the beginning. Do but believe me, it is important enough for you to read it quite to the end; for it contains various arrangements for your future, and settles on you a suite and a yearly allowance, as is suitable for a royal Princess.

Oh, what care I for these things! cried Elizabeth merrily. That is my Major Domo's concern; and he may attend to it.

But there is yet another paragraph that will interest you more, said Catharine with a slight smile; for it is a full and complete reparation to my proud and ambitious Elizabeth. You recollect still the answer which your father gave the King of France when he solicited your hand for the Dauphin?

Do I recollect it! cried Elizabeth, her features quickly becoming gloomy. King Henry said: Anne Boleyn's daughter is not worthy to accept the hand of a royal Prince.

Well then, Elizabeth, that the reparation made to you may be complete, the King, while he grants you your lawful title and honor, has decreed that you are permitted to marry only a husband of equal birth; to give your hand only to a royal Prince, if you would preserve your right of succeeding to the throne. Oh, certainly, there could be no more complete recantation of the affront once put upon you. And that he consented to do this, you owe to the eloquent intercession of a true and trusty friend; you have John Heywood to thank for it.

John Heywood! cried Elizabeth in a bitter tone. Oh, I thank you, Queen, that it was not you, who determined my father to this decision. John Heywood did it, and you call him my friend? You say that he is a true and devoted servant to us both? Beware of his fidelity, Queen, and build not on his devotedness; for I tell you his soul is full of falsehood; and while he appears to bow before you in humbleness, his eyes are only searching for the place on your heel where he can strike you most surely and most mortally. Oh, he is a serpent, a venomous serpent; and he has just wounded me mortally and incurably.

But no, continued she energetically, I will not submit to this fraud; I will not be the slave of this injurious law! I will be free to love and to hate as my heart demands; I will not be shackled, nor be compelled to renounce this man, whom I perhaps love, and to marry that one, whom I perhaps abhor.

With an expression of firm, energetic resolve, she took the roll of parchment and handed it back to Catharine.

Queen, take this parchment back again; return it to my father; and tell him, that I thank him for his provident goodness, but will decline the brilliant lot which this act offers me. I love freedom so much, that even a royal crown cannot allure me when I am to receive it with my hands bound and my heart not free.

Poor child, sighed Catharine, you know not then, that the royal crown always binds us in fetters and compresses our heart in iron clamps? Ah, you want to be free, and yet a queen! Oh, believe me, Elizabeth, none are less free than sovereigns! No one has less the right and the power to live according to the dictates of his heart, than Princes.

Then, exclaimed Elizabeth with flashing eyes—then I renounce the melancholy fortune of being perchance one day queen. Then I do not subscribe to this law, which wants to guide my heart, and limit my will. What! shall the daughter of King Henry of England allow her ways to be traced out by a miserable strip of parchment? and shall a sheet of paper be able to intrude itself between me and my heart? I am a royal Princess; and why will they compel me to give my hand only to a King's son? Aye, you are right; it is not my father that has made this law; for my father's proud soul has never been willing to submit to any such constraint of miserable etiquette. He has loved where he pleased; and no Parliament—no law has been able to hinder him in this respect. I will be my father's own daughter. I will not submit to this law!

Poor child, said Catharine, nevertheless you will be obliged to learn well how to submit; for one is not a Princess without paying for it. No one asks whether our heart bleeds. They throw a purple robe over it, and though it be reddened with our heart's blood, who then sees and suspects it? You are yet so young, Elizabeth; you yet hope so much!

I hope so much, because I have already suffered so much—my eyes have been already made to shed so many tears. I have already in my childhood had to take beforehand my share of the pain and sorrow of life; now I will demand my share of life's pleasure and enjoyment also.

And who tells you that you shall not have it? This love forces on you no particular husband; it but gives you the proud right, once disputed, of seeking your husband among the Princes of royal blood.

Oh, cried Elizabeth with flashing eyes, if I should ever really be a queen, I should be prouder to choose a husband whom I might make a king, than such a one as would make me a queen.* Oh, say yourself, Catharine, must it not be a high and noble pleasure to confer glory and greatness on one we love; to raise him in the omnipotence of our love high above all other men, and to lay our own greatness, our own glory, humbly at his feet, that he may be adorned therewith and make his own possession what is ours?

By Heaven, you are as proud and ambitious as a man, said Catharine smiling. Your father's own daughter! So thought Henry when he gave his hand to Anne Boleyn; so thought he when he exalted me to be his queen. But it behooves him thus to think and act, for he is a man.

He thought thus, because he loved—not because he was a man.

And you, too, Elizabeth—do you, too, think thus because you love?

Yes, I love! exclaimed Elizabeth, as with an impulsive movement

* Elizabeth's own words. Lett, vol. 2, page 62.

she threw herself into Catharine's arms, and hid her blushing face in the Queen's bosom. Yes, I love! I love like my father!—regardless of my rank, of my birth; but feeling only that my lover is of equally high birth, in the nobility of his sentiment, in his genius and noble mind; that he is my superior in all the great and fine qualities, which should adorn a man, and yet are conferred on so few. Judge now, Queen, whether that law there can make me happy. He, whom I love, is no Prince—no son of a King.

Poor Elizabeth! said Catharine, clasping the young girl fervently in her arms.

And why do you bewail my fate, when it is in your power to make me happy? asked Elizabeth urgently. It was you who prevailed on the King to relieve me of the disgrace that rested on me; you will also have power over him to set aside this clause which contains my heart's sentence of condemnation.

Catharine shook her head with a sigh. My power does not reach so far, said she sadly. Ah, Elizabeth, why did you not put confidence in me? Why did you not let me know sooner, that your heart cherished a love which is in opposition to this law? Why did you not tell your friend your dangerous secret?

Just because it is dangerous, I concealed it from you; and just on that account I do not even now mention the name of the loved one. Queen, you shall not through me become a guilty traitoress against your husband; for you well know, that he punishes every secret concealed from him as an act of high treason. No, Queen; if I am a criminal, you shall not be my accomplice. Ah, it is always dangerous to be the confidant of such a secret. You see that in John Heywood. He alone was my confidant, and he betrayed me. I myself put the weapons into his hands, and he turned them against me.

No, no, said Catharine thoughtfully; John Heywood is true and trusty, and incapable of treachery.

He has betrayed me! exclaimed Elizabeth impetuously. He knew—he only—that I love, and that my beloved, though of noble, still is not of princely birth. Yet it was he, as you said yourself, who moved the King to introduce this paragraph into the act of succession.

Then, without doubt, he has wished to save you from an error of your heart.

No, he has been afraid of the danger of being privy to this secret, and at the cost of my heart and my happiness he wanted to escape this danger. But, oh, Catharine, you are a noble, great and strong woman; you are incapable of such petty fear—such low calculation; therefore, stand by me; be my saviour and protectress! By virtue of that oath which we have just now mutually taken; by virtue of that mutual clasp of the hands just given, I call you to my help and my assistance. Oh, Catharine, allow me this high pleasure, so full of blessing, of being at some time perhaps able to make him whom I love, great and powerful by my will. Allow me this intoxicating delight of being able with my

hand to offer to his ambition at once power and glory—it may be even a crown. Oh, Catharine, on my knees I conjure you—assist me to repeal this hated law, which wants to bind my heart and my hand.

In passionate excitement she had fallen before the Queen, and was holding up her hands imploringly to her.

Catharine, smiling, bent down and raised her up in her arms. Enthusiast, said she, poor young enthusiast! Who knows whether you will thank me for it one day, if I accede to your wish; and whether you will not some time curse this hour which has brought you, perhaps, instead of the hoped-for pleasure, only a knowledge of your delusion and misery.

And were it even so! cried Elizabeth energetically, still it is better to endure a wretchedness we ourselves have chosen, than to be forced to a happy lot. Say Catharine—say will you lend me your assistance? Will you induce the King to withdraw this hated clause? If you do it not, Queen, I swear to you by the soul of my mother, that I will not submit to this law; that I will solemnly, before all the world, renounce the privilege that is offered me; that I——

You are a dear, foolish child, interrupted Catharine—a child, that in youthful presumption might dare wish to fetch the lightnings down from heaven, and borrow from Jupiter his thunderbolt. Oh, you are still so young and inexperienced, not to know that fate regards not our murmurs and our sighs, and despite our reluctance and our refusal, still leads us its own ways, not our own. You will have to learn that yet, poor child!

But I will not! cried Elizabeth stamping on the floor with all the pettishness of a child. I will not ever and eternally be the victim of another's will; and fate itself shall not have power to make me its slave!

Well, we will see now, said Catharine smiling. We will try this time, at least, to contend against fate; and I will assist you if I can.

And I will love you for it as my mother and my sister at once, cried Elizabeth, as with ardor she threw herself into Catharine's arms. Yes, I will love you for it; and I will pray God, that he may one day give me the opportunity to show my gratitude, and to reward you for your magnanimity and goodness.

CHAPTER VII.

INTRIGUES.

For a few days past the King's gout had grown worse, and to his wrath and grief it confined him as a prisoner to his rolling chair.

The King was, therefore, very naturally gloomy and dejected, and hurled the lightnings of his wrath on all those who enjoyed the melancholy prerogative of being in his presence. His pains, instead of softening his disposition, seemed only to heighten still more his natural ferocity; and often might be heard through the halls of the palace of Whitehall the King's angry growl, and his loud thundering invectives, which no longer spared any one, nor showed respect for any rank or dignity.

Earl Douglas, Gardiner and Wriothesley very well knew how to take advantage of this wrathful humor of the King for their purposes, and to afford the King, tortured with pain, one satisfaction at least—the satisfaction of making others suffer also.

Never had there been seen in England so many burnt at the stake, as in those days of the King's sickness; never had the prisons been so crowded; never had so much blood flowed as King Henry now caused to be shed.*

But all this did not yet suffice to appease the blood-thirstiness of the King, and his friends and councellors, and his priests.

Still there remained untouched two mighty pillars of protestantism that Gardiner and Wriothesley had to overthrow. These were the Queen and Archbishop Cranmer.

Still there were two powerful and hated enemies whom the Seymour's had to overcome; these were the Duke of Norfolk and his son, the Earl of Surrey.

But the various parties that in turn beseiged the King's ear and controlled it, were in singular and unheard of opposition, and at the same time inflamed with bitterest enmity, and they strove to supplant each other in the favor of the King.

To the popish party of Gardiner and Earl Douglas, everything depended on dispossessing the Seymours of the King's favor; and they, on the other hand, wanted above all things to continue in power the young Queen already inclined to them, and to destroy for the papists one of their most powerful leaders, the Duke of Norfolk.

The one party controlled the King's ear through the Queen; the other through his favorite Earl Douglas.

*During the King's reign, and at the instigation of the clergy, 2800 persons were burnt and executed, because they would not recognize the religious institutions, established by the King, as the only right and true ones. Leti, vol. 1, page 84

Never had the King been more gracious and affable to his consort; never had he required more Earl Douglas' presence than in those days of his sickness and bodily anguish.

But there was yet a third party that occupied an important place in the King's favor—a power that every one feared, and which seemed to keep itself perfectly independent and free from all foreign influences. This power was John Heywood, the King's fool, the epigrammatist, who was dreaded by the whole Court.

Only *one* person had influence with him. John Heywood was the friend of the Queen. For the moment, then, it appeared as the "heretical party," of which the Queen was regarded as the head, was the most powerful at Court.

It was, therefore, very natural for the popish party to cherish an ardent hatred against the Queen; very natural for them to be contriving new plots and machinations to ruin her, and hurl her from the throne.

But Catharine knew very well the danger that threatened her; and she was on her guard. She watched her every look, her every word; and Gardiner and Douglas could not examine the Queen's manner of life each day and hour, more suspiciously than she herself did.

She saw the sword that hung daily over her head; and thanks to her prudence and presence of mind—thanks to the ever thoughtful watchfulness and cunning of her friend Heywood; she had still known how to avoid the falling of that sword.

Since that fatal ride in the wood of Epping Forest, she had not again spoken to Thomas Seymour alone; for Catharine very well knew that everywhere, whithersoever she turned her steps, some spying eye might follow her, some listener's ear might be concealed, which might hear her words however softly whispered, and repeat them where they might be interpreted into a sentence of death against her.

She had, therefore, renounced the pleasure of speaking to her lover otherwise than before witnesses, and of seeing him otherwise than in the presence of her whole Court.

What need had she either for secret meetings? What mattered it to her pure and innocent heart that she was not permitted to be alone with him? Still she might see him, and drink courage and delight from the sight of his haughty and handsome face; still she might be near him, and could listen to the music of his voice, and intoxicate her heart with his fine euphonious and vigorous discourse.

Catharine, the woman of eight and twenty, had preserved the enthusiasm and innocence of a young girl of fourteen. Thomas Seymour was her first love; and she loved him with that purity and guileless warmth which is indeed peculiar to the first love only.

It sufficed her, therefore, to see him; to be near him; to know that he loved her; that he was true to her; that all his thoughts and wishes belonged to her; as hers to him.

And that she knew. For there ever remained to her the sweet enjoyment of his letters—of those passionate written avowals of his love,

If she was not permitted to say also to him how warmly and ardently she returned this love, yet she could write it to him.

It was John Heywood, the true and discreet friend, that brought her these letters, and bore her answers to him, stipulating, as a reward for this dangerous commission, that they both should regard him as the sole confidant of their love; that both should burn up the letters which he brought them. He had not been able to hinder Catharine from this unhappy passion, but wanted at least to preserve her from the fatal consequences of it. Since he knew that this love needed a confidant, he assumed this role, that Catharine, in the vehemence of her passion, and in the simplicity of her innocent heart, might not make others sharers of her dangerous secret.

John Heywood therefore watched over Catharine's safety and happiness, as she watched over Thomas Seymour and her friends. He protected and guarded her with the King, as she guarded Cranmer, and protected him from the constantly renewed assaults of his enemies.

This it was that they could never forgive the Queen—that she had delivered Cranmer, the noble and liberal-minded Archbishop of Canterbury, from their snares. More than once Catharine had succeeded in destroying their intrigueing schemes, and in rending the nets that Gardiner and Earl Douglas, with so sly and skillful hand, had spread for Cranmer.

If therefore they would overthrow Cranmer, they must first overthrow the Queen. For this there was a real means—a means of destroying at once the Queen and the hated Seymours, who stood in the way of the papists.

If they could prove to the King that Catharine entertained criminal intercourse with Thomas Seymour, then were they both lost; then were the power and glory of the papists secured.

But whence to fetch the proofs of this dangerous secret, which the crafty Douglas had read only in Catharine's eyes, and for which he had no other support than his bare conviction? How should they begin to influence the Queen to some inconsiderate step, to a speaking witness of her love?

Time hung so heavily on the King's hands! It would have been so easy to persuade him to some cruel deed—to a hasty sentence of death!

But it was not the blood of the Seymours for which the King thirsted. Earl Douglas very well knew that. He, who observed the King day and night—he, who examined and sounded his every sigh, each of his softly murmured words, every twitch of his mouth, every wrinkle of his brow—he well knew what dark and bloody thoughts stirred the King's soul, and whose blood it was for which he thirsted.

The royal tiger would drink the blood of the Howards; and that they still lived in health and abundance and glory, while he, their King and master, lonely and sad, was tossing on his couch in pain and agony—that was the worm which gnawed at the King's heart, which made his pains yet more painful; his tortures yet keener.

The King was jealous—jealous of the power and greatness of the Howards. It filled him with gloomy hatred, to think that the Duke of Norfolk, when he rode through the streets of London, was everywhere received with the acclamations and rejoicing of the people, while he, the King, was a prisoner in his palace. It was a gnawing pain for him to know that Henry Howard, Earl Surrey, was praised as the handsomest and greatest man of England; that he was called the noblest poet; the greatest scholar; while yet he, the King, had also composed his poems and written his learned treatises, yaye even a particular devout book, which he had had printed for his people, and ordered them to read it instead of the Bible.*

It was the Howards who everywhere disputed his fame. The Howards supplanted him in the favor of his people, and usurped the love and admiration which were due to the King alone, and which should be directed towards no one but him. He lay on his bed of pain, and without doubt the people would have forgotten him, if he had not by the block, the stake and the scaffold, daily reminded them of himself. He lay on his bed of pain, while the Duke, splendid and magnificent, exhibited himself to the people and transported them with enthusiasm by the lavish and kingly generosity with which he scattered his money among the people.

Yes, the Duke of Norfolk was the King's dangerous rival. The crown was not secure upon his head so long as the Howards lived. And who could conjecture whether in time to come, when Henry closed his eyes, the exultant love of the people might not call to the throne the Duke of Norfolk, or his noble son, the Earl of Surrey, instead of the rightful heir—instead of the little boy Edward, Henry's only son?

When the King thought of that, he had a feeling as though a stream of fire were whirling up to his brain; and he convulsively clenched his hands, and screamed and roared that he would take vengeance—vengeance on those hated Howards, who wanted to snatch the crown from his son.

Edward, the little boy of tender age—he alone was the divinely consecrated, legitimate heir to the King's crown. It had cost his father so great a sacrifice to give his people this son and successor! In order to do it, he had sacrificed Jane Seymour, his own beloved wife; he had let the mother be put to death, in order to preserve the son, the heir of his crown.

And the people did not once thank the King for this sacrifice that Jane Seymour's husband had made for them. The people received with shouts the Duke of Norfolk, the father of that adulterous Queen whom Henry loved so much, that her infidelity had struck him like the stab of a poisoned dagger.

These were the thoughts that occupied the King on his bed of pain, and upon which he dwelt with all the wilfulness and moodiness of a sick man.

* Burnet, vol. 1, page 95.

We shall have to sacrifice these Howards to him! said Earl Douglas to Gardiner, as they had just again listened to a burst of rage from their royal master. If we would at last succeed in ruining the Queen, we must first destroy the Howards.

The pious Bishop looked at him inquiringly and in astonishment.

Earl Douglas smiled. Your Highness is too exalted and noble to be always able to comprehend the things of this world. Your look, which seeks only God and heaven, does not always see the petty and pitiful things that happen here on the earth below.

Oh but, said Gardiner with a cruel smile, I see them, and it charms my eye when I see how God's vengeance punishes the enemies of the Church here on earth. Set up then, by all means, a stake or a scaffold for these Howards, if their death can be to us a means to our pious and godly end. You are certain of my blessing and my assistance. Only I do not quite comprehend how the Howards can stand in the way of our plots which are formed against the Queen, inasmuch as they are numbered among the Queen's enemies, and profess themselves of the Church, in which alone is salvation.

The Earl of Surrey is an apostate who has opened his ear and heart to the doctrine of Calvin!

Then let his head fall, for he is a criminal before God, and no one ought to have compassion on him! And what is there that we lay to the charge of the father?

The Duke of Norfolk is well nigh yet more dangerous than his son; for although a catholic, he has not nevertheless the right faith; and his soul is full of unholy sympathy and injurious mildness. He bewails those whose blood is shed because they are devoted to the false doctrine of the priests of Baal; and he calls us both the King's blood-hounds.

Well then, cried Gardiner with an uneasy dismal smile, we will show him that he has called us by the right name; we will rend him in pieces!

Besides, as we have said, the Howards stand in the way of our schemes in relation to the Queen, said Earl Douglas earnestly. The King's mind is so completely filled with this one hatred and this one jealousy, that there is no room in it for any other feeling, for any other hate. It is true he signs often enough these death-warrants which we lay before him; but he does it, as the lion, with utter carelessness and without anger, crushes the little mouse that is by chance under his paws. But if the lion is to rend in pieces his equal, he must beforehand be put into a rage. When he is raging, then you must let him have his prey. The Howards shall be his first prey. But, then, we must exert ourselves, that when the lion again shakes his mane, his wrath may fall upon Catharine Parr and the Seymours.

The Lord our God will be with us, and enlighten us, that we may find the right means to strike his enemies a sure blow! exclaimed Gardiner, devoutly folding his hands.

I believe the right means are already found, said Earl Douglas with a smile; and even before this day descends to its close, the gates of the

Tower will open to receive this haughty and soft hearted Duke of Norfolk, and this apostate Earl Surrey. Perchance we may even succeed in striking at one blow the Queen together with the Howards. See! an equipage stops before the grand entrance, and I see the Duchess of Norfolk and her daughter, the Duchess of Richmond, getting out of the carriage. Only see! they are making signs to us. I have promised to conduct these two noble and pious ladies to the King; and I shall do so. Whilst we are there, pray for us, your Highness, that our words, like well aimed arrows, may strike the King's heart, and then rebound upon the Queen and the Seymours!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ACCUSATION.

In vain had the King hoped to master his pains, or at least to forget them, while he tried to sleep. Sleep had fled from the King's couch; and as he now sat in his rolling-chair, sad, weary and harrassed with pain, he thought with gloomy spite, that the Duke of Norfolk told him but yesterday that sleep was a thing under his control, and he could summon it to him whenever it seemed good to him.

This thought made him raving with anger; and grinding his teeth he muttered: He can sleep; and I, his lord and King—I am a poor beggar that in vain whines to God above for a little sleep, a little forgetfulness of his pains! But it is this traitorous Norfolk that prevents me from sleeping. Thoughts of him keep me awake and restless. And I cannot crush this traitor with these hands of mine; I am a King, and yet so powerless and weak, that I can find no means of accusing this traitor, and convicting him of his sinful and blasphemous deeds. Oh, where may I find him—that true friend, that devoted servant, who ventures to understand my unuttered thoughts, and fulfill the wishes to which I dare not give a name.

Just as he was thus thinking, the door behind him opened and in walked Earl Douglas. His countenance was proud and triumphant, and so wild a joy gleamed from his eyes that even the King was surprised at it.

Oh, said he peevishly, you call yourself my friend; and you are cheerful, Douglas, while your King is a poor prisoner, whom the gout has chained with brazen bands to this chair.

You will recover, my King; and go forth from this imprisonment, as the conqueror, dazzling and bright, that by his appearance under God's

blessing treads all his enemies in the dust—that triumphs over all those who are against him, and would betray their King!

Are there then any such traitors, who threaten their King? asked Henry with a dark frown.

Aye, there are such traitors!

Name them to me! said the King, trembling with passionate impatience. Name them to me, that my arm may crush them and my avenging justice overtake the heads of the guilty.

It is superfluous to mention them, for you, King Henry, the wise and all-knowing—you know their names.

And bending down closer to the King's ear, Earl Douglas continued: King Henry, I certainly have a right to call myself your my most faithful and devoted servant, for I have read your thoughts. I have understood the noble grief that disturbs your heart, and banishes sleep from your eyes and peace from your soul. You saw the foe that was creeping in the dark; you heard the low hiss of the serpent that was darting his venemous sting at your heel. But you were so much the noble and intrepid King, that you would not yourself become the accuser—nay, you would not once draw back the foot menaced by the serpent. Great and merciful, like God himself, you smiled upon him whom you knew to be your enemy. But I, my King—I have other duties. I am like the faithful dog, that has eyes only for the safety of his master, and falls upon every one that comes to menace him. I have seen the serpent that would kill you, and I will bruise his head!

And what is the name of this serpent of which you speak? asked the King; and his heart beat so boisterously that he felt it on his trembling lips.

It is called, said Earl Douglas earnestly and solemnly—it is called Howard!

The King uttered a cry, and, forgetting his gout and his pains, arose from his chair.

Howard? said he with a cruel smile. Say you that a Howard threatens our life? Which one is it? Name me the traitor!

I name them both—father and son! I name the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Surrey! I say that they both are traitors, who threaten the life and honor of my King, and with blasphemous arrogance dare stretch out their hands even to the crown!

Ah, I knew it, I knew it! screamed the King. And it was this that made me sleepless, and ate into my body like red-hot iron.

And as he fastened on Douglas his eyes flashing with rage, he asked with a grim smile: Can you prove that these Howards are traitors? Can you prove that they aim at my crown?

I hope to be able to do so, said Douglas. To be sure there are no great convincing facts——

Oh, said the King interrupting him with a savage laugh, there is no need of great facts. Give into my hand but a little thread; and I will

make out of it a cord that shall be strong enough to haul the father and son up to the gallows at one time.

Oh, for the son there is proof enough, said the Earl with a smile; and as regards the father, I will produce your Majesty some accusers against him, who will be important enough to bring the Duke also to the block. Will you allow me to bring them to you immediately?

Yes, bring them, bring them! cried the King. Every minute is precious that may lead these traitors sooner to their punishment.

Earl Douglas stepped to the door and opened it. Three veiled female figures entered and bowed reverentially.

Ah, whispered the King with a cruel smile, as he sunk back again into his chair, they are the three Fates that spin the Howards' thread of life, and will now, it is to be hoped, break it off. I will furnish them with the scissors for it; and if they are not sharp enough, I will, with my own royal hands, help them to break the thread.

Sire, said Earl Douglas, as at a sign from him the three women unveiled themselves, Sire, the wife, the daughter and the mistress of the Duke of Norfolk have come to accuse him of high treason. The mother and the sister of the Earl of Surrey are here to charge him with a crime equally worthy of death.

Now verily, exclaimed the King, it must be a grievous and blasphemous sin, which so much exasperates the temper of these noble women, and makes them deaf to the voice of nature.

It is indeed such a sin, said the Duchess of Norfolk in a solemn tone; and approaching a few paces nearer to the King, she continued: Sire, I accuse the Duke, my divorced husband, of high treason and disloyalty to his King. He has been so bold as to appropriate your own royal coat of arms; and on his seal and equipage, and over the entrance of his palace, is displayed the arms of the Kings of England.

That is true! said the King, who, now that he was certain of the destruction of the Howards, had regained his calmness and self-possession, and perfectly re assumed the air of a strict, impartial judge. Yes, he bears the royal arms on his shield, but yet if we remember rightly, the crown and paraph of our ancestor Edward the Third are wanting.

He has now added this crown and this paraph to his coat of arms, said Miss Holland. He says he is entitled to them; for that, like the King, he also is descended in direct line from Edward the Third; and, therefore, the royal arms belong likewise to him.

If he says that, he is a traitor who presumes to call his king and master his equal, cried the King, coloring up with a grim joy at now at length having his enemy in his power.

He is indeed a traitor, continued Miss Holland. Often have I heard him say, he had the same right to the throne of England as Henry the Eighth; and that a day might come when he would contend with Henry's son for that crown.

Ah! cried the King, and his eyes darted flashes so fierce that even Earl Douglas shrank before them, ah, he will contend with my son for

the Crown of England! It is well now; for now it is my sacred duty, as a King and as a father, to crush this serpent that wants to bite me on the heel; and no compassion and no pity ought now to restrain me longer. And were there no other proofs of his guilt and his crime, than these words that he has spoken to you, yet are they sufficient, and will rise up against him, like the hangman's aids who are to conduct him to the block.

But there are yet other proofs, said Miss Holland laconically.

The King was obliged to unbutton his doublet. It seemed as though joy would suffocate him.

Name them! commanded he.

He dares deny the King's supremacy; he calls the Bishop of Rome the sole Head and Holy Father of the Church.

Ah, does he so? exclaimed the King laughing. Well, we shall see now, whether this Holy Father will save this faithful son from the scaffold which we will erect for him. Yes, yes, we must give the world a new example of our incorruptible justice, which overtakes every one, however high and mighty he may be, and however near our throne he may stand. Really, really, it grieves our heart to lay low this oak which we had planted so near our throne, that we might lean upon it and support ourselves by it; but justice demands this sacrifice, and we will make it—not in wrath and spite, but only to meet the sacred and painful duty of our royalty. We have greatly loved this Duke, and it grieves us to tear this love from our heart.

And with his hand, glittering with jewels, the King wiped from his eyes the tears which were not there.

But how? asked the King then after a pause, will you have the courage to repeat your accusation publicly before Parliament? Will you, his wife, and you, his mistress, publicly swear with a sacred oath to the truth of your declaration?

I will do so, said the Duchess solemnly; for he is no longer my husband; no longer the father of my children, but simply the enemy of my King; and to serve *him* is my most sacred duty.

I will do so, cried Miss Holland with a bewitching smile; for he is no longer my lover, but only a traitor, an atheist, who is audacious enough to recognize as the Holy Head of Christendom that man at Rome, who has dared hurl his curse against the sublime head of our King. It is this indeed, that has torn my heart from the Duke, and that has made me now hate him as ardently as I once loved him.

With a gracious smile, the King presented both his hands to the two women. You have done me a great service to-day, my ladies, said he, and I will find a way to reward you for it. I will give you, Duchess, the half of his estate, as though you were his rightful heir and lawful widow. And you, Miss Holland, I will leave in undisputed possession of all the goods and treasures that the enamoured Duke has given you.

The two ladies broke out into loud expressions of thanks, and into enthusiastic rapture over the liberal and generous King, who was so gra-

cious as to give them what they already had, and to bestow on them what was already their own property.

Well, and are you wholly mute, my little Duchess? asked the King after a pause, turning to the Duchess of Richmond, who had withdrawn to the embrasure of a window.

Sire, said the Duchess smiling, I was only waiting for my cue.

And this cue is?

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey! As your Majesty knows, I am a merry and harmless woman; and I understand better how to laugh and joke, than to talk much seriously. The two noble and fair ladies have accused the Duke, my father; and they have done so in a very dignified and solemn manner. I wish to accuse my brother, Henry Howard; but you must exercise forbearance, if my words sound less solemn and elevated. They have told you, Sire, that the Duke of Norfolk is a traitor and a criminal, who denominates the Pope of Rome, and not you, my exalted King, the Head of the Church. Now, the Earl of Surrey is neither a traitor nor a papist; and he has neither devised criminal plots against the throne of England; nor has he denied the supremacy of the King. No, Sire, the Earl of Surrey is no traitor, and no papist!

The Duchess paused, and looked with a malicious and droll smile into the astonished faces of those present.

A dark frown gathered on the King's brow, and his eyes, which just before had looked so cheerful, were now fixed with an angry expression on the young Duchess.

Why then, my Lady, have you made your appearance here? asked he. Why have you come here, if you have nothing farther to say than what I already know—that the Earl of Surrey is a very loyal subject, and a man without any ambition, who neither courts the favor of my people, nor thinks of laying his traitorous hands on my crown?

The young Duchess shook her head with a smile. I know not whether he does all that, said she. I have indeed heard, that he said with bitter scorn, that you, my King, wanted to be the protector of religion, yet you yourself were entirely without religion and without belief. Also, he of late broke out into bitter curses against you, because you had robbed him of his field-marshal's staff, and given it to Earl Hertford, that noble Seymour. Also, he meant to see whether the throne of England was so firm and steady that it had no need of his hand and his arm to prop it. All that, I have of course heard from him; but you are right, Sire; it is unimportant—it is not worth mentioning, and, therefore, I do not even make it as an accusation against him.

Ah, you are always a mad little witch, Arabella! cried the King, who had again regained his cheerfulness. You say you will not accuse him, and yet you make his head a plaything that you poise upon your crimson lips. But take care, my little Duchess—take care, that this head does not fall from your lips with your laughing and roll down to the ground; for I will not stop it—this head of the Earl of Surrey, of whom you say that he is no traitor.

But is it not monotonous and tiresome, if we accuse the father and son of the same crime? asked the Duchess laughing. Let us have a little variation! Let the Duke be a traitor; the son, my King, is by far a still worse criminal!

Is there then a still worse and more execrable crime than to be a traitor to his King and master, and to speak of the Anointed of the Lord without reverence and love?

Yes, your Majesty, there is a still worse crime; and of that I accuse the Earl of Surrey. He is an adulterer!

An adulterer? repeated the King with an expression of abhorrence. Yes, my Lady, you are right; that is a more execrable and unnatural crime, and we shall judge it strictly. For it shall not be said that modesty and virtue found no protector in the King of this land, and that he will not as a judge punish and crush all those who dare sin against decency and morals. Oh, the Earl of Surrey is an adulterer, is he?

That is to say, Sire, he dares with his sinful love to pursue a virtuous and chaste wife. He dares to raise his wicked looks to a woman who stands as high above him as the sun above mortals, and who, at least, by the greatness and high position of her husband, should be secure from all impure desires and lustful wishes.

Ah, cried the King indignantly, I see already whither that tends. It is always the same accusation; and now I say, as you did just now, let us have a little variation! The accusation, I have already often heard; but the proofs are always wanting.

Sire, this time, it may be, we can give the proofs, said the Duchess earnestly. Would you know, my noble King, who the Geraldine is to whom Henry Howard addresses his love songs? Shall I tell you the real name of this woman to whom, in the presence of your sacred person and of your whole Court, he uttered his passionate protestations of love and his oaths of eternal faithfulness? Well now, this Geraldine, so adored, so deified—is the Queen!

That is not true! cried the King, crimson with anger; and he clenched his hands so firmly about the arms of his chair that it cracked. That is not true, my Lady!

It is true! said the Duchess haughtily and saucily. It is true, Sire; for the Earl of Surrey has confessed to me myself that it is the Queen whom he loves, and that Geraldine is only a melodious appellation for Catharine.

He has confessed it to you yourself? inquired the King, with gasping breath. Ah, he dares love his King's wife? Woe to him, woe!

He raised his clenched fist threateningly to heaven, and his eyes darted lightning. But how? said he after a pause; has he not recently read before us a poem to his Geraldine, in which he thanks her for her love, and acknowledges himself eternally her debtor for the kiss she gave him?

He has read before your Majesty such a poem to Geraldine!

The King uttered a low cry, and raised himself in his seat. Proofs,

said he in a hoarse, hollow voice—proofs—or, I tell you, your own head shall atone for this accusation!

This proof, your Majesty, *I* will give you! said Earl Douglas solemnly. It pleases your Majesty, in the fulness of your gentleness and mercy, to want to doubt the accusation of the noble Duchess. Well now, I will furnish you infallible proof that Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, really loves the Queen, and that he really dares to extol and adore the King's wife as *his* Geraldine. You shall with your own ears, Sire, hear how Earl Surrey swears his love to the Queen.

The scream which the King now uttered was so frightful, and gave evidence of so much inward agony and rage, that it struck the Earl dumb, and made the cheeks of the ladies turn pale.

Douglas, Douglas, beware how you rouse the lion! gasped the King. The lion might rend you yourself in pieces!

This very night, I will give you the proof that you demand, Sire. This very night, you shall hear how Earl Surrey, sitting at the feet of his Geraldine, swears to her his love.

It is well! said the King. This night then! Woe to you, Douglas, if you cannot redeem your word!

I will do so, your Majesty! For this, it is only necessary that you will be graciously pleased to swear to me that you will not, by a sigh, or a breath, betray yourself. The Earl is suspicious; and the fear of an evil conscience has sharpened his ear. He would recognize you by your sigh; and his lips would not speak those words and avowals which you desire to hear.

I swear to you, that I will not, by any sigh or breath, betray my presence! said the King solemnly. I swear this to you by the Holy Mother of God! But now let that suffice. Air—air—I suffocate! Every thing swims before my eyes. Open the window, that a little air may flow in! Ah, that is good! This air at least is pure, and not infected with sin and slander!

And the King had Earl Douglas roll him to the opened window, and inspired in long draughts that pure fresh air. Then he turned to the ladies with an agreeable smile.

My Ladies, said he, I thank you! You have to-day shown yourselves my true and devoted friends! I shall ever remember it, and I beg you, if at any time you need a friend and protector, to apply to me with all confidence. We shall never forget what great service you have to day rendered us.

He nodded to them in a friendly manner, whilst, with a majestic wave of the hand, he dismissed them, and concluded the audience.

And now, Douglas, exclaimed the King vehemently, as soon as the ladies had retired—now I have had enough of this dreadful torture! Oh, you say I am to punish the traitors—these Surreys—and you inflict on me the most frightful pains of the rack!

Sire, there was no other means of delivering up this Surrey to you.

You were wishing that he were a criminal; and I shall prove to you that he is so.

Oh, I shall then be able at least to tread his hated head under my feet! said the King grinding his teeth. I shall no more tremble before this malicious enemy, who goes about among my people with his hypocritical tongue, while I, tortured with pain, sit in the dungeon of my sick-room. Yes, yes, I thank you, Douglas, that you will hand him over to my arm of vengeance; and my soul is full of joy and serenity at it. Ah, why were you obliged to cloud this fair, this sublime hour? Why was it necessary to weave the Queen into this gloomy web of guilt and crime? Her cheerful smile and her radiant looks have ever been an enjoyment so dear to my eyes.

Sire, I do not by any means say, that the Queen is guilty. Only there was no other means to prove to you Earl Surrey's guilt, than that you should hear for yourself his confession of love to the Queen.

And I will hear it! cried the King, who had now already overcome the sentimental emotion of his heart. Yes, I will have full conviction of Surrey's guilt; and woe to the Queen, should I find her also guilty! This night then, Earl! But till then, silence and secresy! We will have father and son seized and imprisoned at the same hour; for otherwise the imprisonment of the one might easily serve as a warning to the other, and he might escape my just wrath. Ah, they are so sly—these Howards—and their hearts are so full of cunning and malice! But now they shall escape me no more; now they are ours! How it does me good to think that! And how briskly and lightly my heart leaps! It is as though a stream of new life were rushing through my veins, and a new power were infused into my blood. Oh, it was these Howards that made me sick. I shall be well again when I know that they are in the Tower. Yes, yes, my heart leaps with joy, and this is to be a happy and blessed day. Call the Queen hither to me, that I may once more enjoy her rosy face before I make it turn pale with terror. Yes, let the Queen come, and let her adorn herself; I want to see her once more in the full splendor of her youth and her royalty, before her star goes out in darkness. I will once more delight myself with her before I make her weep. Ah, know you, Douglas, that there is no enjoyment keener, more devilish, and more heavenly, than to see such a person who smiles and suspects nothing, while she is already condemned; who still adorns her head with roses, while the executioner is already sharpening the axe that is to lay that head low; who still has hopes of the future, and of joy and happiness, while her hour of life has already run out; while I have already bidden her stop and descend into the grave. So, call the Queen to me; and tell her that we are in a merry mood and want to jest and laugh with her! Call all the ladies and lords of our Court; and have the royal saloons opened; and let them be radiant with the brilliancy of the lights; and let us have music—loud, crashing music—for we want at least to make this a merry day for us, since it seems as though we should have a sad and unhappy night. Yes, yes,

a merry day we will have; and after that, let come what come may. The saloons shall resound with laughter and joyfulness; and naught but rejoicing and fun shall be heard in the great royal saloons. And invite also the Duke of Norfolk, my noble cousin, who shares with me my royal coat of arms. Yes, invite him, that I may enjoy once more his haughty and imposing beauty and grandeur before this august sun is extinguished and leaves us again in night and darkness. Then invite also Wriothesley, the High Chancellor, and let him bring with him a few gallant and brave soldiers of our body-guard. They are to be the noble Duke's suite, when he wishes to leave our feast and go homewards—homewards—if not to his palace, yet to the Tower, and to the grave. Go, go, Douglas, and attend to all this for me! And send me here directly my merry fool, John Heywood. He must pass away the time for me till the feast begins. He must make me laugh and be gay.

I will go and fulfil your orders, Sire, said Earl Douglas. I will order the feast, and impart your commands to the Queen and your Court. And first of all I will send John Heywood to you. But pardon me, your Majesty, if I venture to remind you, that you have given me your royal word, not to betray our secret by a single syllable, or even by a sigh.

I gave my word, and I will keep it! said the King. Go now, Earl Douglas, and do what I have bidden you!

Wholly exhausted by this paroxysm of cruel delight, the King sank back in his seat, and moaning and groaning he rubbed his leg, the piercing pains of which he had for a moment forgotten, but which now reminded him of their presence with so much the more cruel fury.

Ah, ah, moaned the King. He boasts of being able to sleep when he pleases. Well, this time we will be the one to lull this haughty Earl to sleep. But it will be a sleep out of which he is never to awake again!

While the King thus wailed and suffered, Earl Douglas hastened with quick, firm step through the suite of royal apartments. A proud triumphant smile played about his lips, and a joyful expression of victory flashed from his eyes.

Triumph! triumph! we shall conquer! said he, as he now entered his daughter's chamber and extended his hand to Lady Jane. Jane, we have at last reached the goal; and you will soon be King Henry's seventh wife!

A rosy shimmer flitted for a moment over Lady Jane's pale colorless cheeks, and a smile played about her lips—a smile, however, which was more sad than loud sobs could have been.

Ah, said she in a low tone, I fear only that my poor head will be too weak to wear a royal crown.

Courage, courage, Jane, lift up your head, and be again my strong, proud daughter!

But I suffer so much, my father, sighed she. It is hell, that burns within me!

But soon, Jane, soon you shall feel again the bliss of heaven! I had forbidden you to grant Henry Howard a meeting because it might bring us danger. Well then, now your tender heart shall be satisfied. To-night you shall embrace your lover again!

Oh, murmured she, he will again call me his Geraldine, and it will not be I, but the Queen, that he kisses in my arms!

Yes, to-day, it will still be so, Jane; but I swear to you that to-day is the last time, that you are obliged to receive him thus.

The last time that I see him? asked Jane with an expression of alarm.

No, Jane, only the last time that Henry Howard loves in you the Queen, and not you yourself.

Oh, he will never love me! murmured she sadly.

He will love you, for you it will be that will save his life. Hasten then, Jane, haste! Write him quickly one of those tender notes that you indite with so masterly a hand. Invite him to a meeting to-night at the usual time and place.

Oh, I shall at last have him again! whispered Lady Jane; and she stepped to the writing-table and with trembling hand began to write.

But suddenly she stopped and looked at her father sharply and suspiciously.

You swear to me, my father, that no danger threatens him, if he comes?

I swear to you, Jane, that you shall be the one to save his life! I swear to you, Jane, that you shall take vengeance on the Queen—vengeance for all the agony, the humiliation and despair that you have suffered by her. To-day she is yet Queen of England! To-morrow she will be nothing more than a criminal, who sighs in the confinement of the Tower for the hour of her execution. And you will be Henry's seventh queen! Write then, my daughter, write! And may love dictate to you the proper words.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FEAST OF DEATH.

For a long time, the King had not appeared in such good spirits as on this festive evening. For a long time, he had not been so completely the tender husband, the good natured companion, the cheerful *bon vivant.*

The pains of his leg seemed to have disappeared, and even the weight of his body seemed to be less burdensome than usual, for more than

once he arose from his chair and walked a few steps through the brilliantly lighted saloon, in which the ladies and lords of his Court, in festive attire, were moving gently to and fro; in which music and laughter resounded.

How tender he showed himself towards the Queen to-day; with what extraordinary kindness he met the Duke of Norfolk; with what smiling attention he listened to the Earl of Surrey as he, at the King's desire, recited some new sonnets to Geraldine!

This marked preference for the noble Howards enraptured the Roman Catholic party at Court, and filled it with new hopes and new confidence.

But one there was, who did not allow himself to be deceived by this mask, which King Henry had to-day put on over his wrathful face.

John Heywood had faith neither in the King's cheerfulness, nor in his tenderness. He knew the King; he was aware that those to whom he was most friendly often had the most to fear from him. Therefore, he watched him; and he saw, beneath this mask of friendliness, the King's real angry countenance sometimes flash out in a quick, hasty look.

The resounding music and the mad rejoicing no more deceived John Heywood! He beheld death standing behind this dazzling life; he smelt the reek of corruption concealed beneath the perfume of these brilliant flowers.

John Heywood no longer laughed and no longer chatted. He watched.

For the first time in a long while the King did not need to-day the exciting jest and the stinging wit of his fool in order to be cheerful and in good humor.

So the fool had time and leisure to be a reasonable and observant man; and he improved the time.

He saw the looks of mutual understanding and secure triumph that Earl Douglas exchanged with Gardiner, and it made him mistrustful to notice that these favorites of the King, at other times so jealous, did not seem to be at all disturbed by the extraordinary marks of favor, which the Howards were enjoying this evening!

Once he heard how Gardiner asked Wriothesley as he passed by: "And the soldiers of the Tower?" and how he replied just as laconically: "They stand near the coach and wait."

It was, therefore, perfectly clear that somebody would be committed to prison this very day. There was, therefore, among the laughing, richly attired and jesting guests of this Court, one, who this very night, when he left these halls radiant with splendor and pleasure, was to behold the dark and gloomy chambers of the Tower.

The only question was, who that one was for whom the brilliant comedy of this evening was to be changed to so sad a drama.

John Heywood felt his heart oppressed with an unaccountable apprehension; and the King's extraordinary tenderness towards the Queen terrified and horrified him.

As now he smiled on Catharine, as he now stroked her cheek, so had the King smiled on Anne Boleyn in the same hour that he ordered her

arrest; so had he stroked Buckingham's cheek on the same day that he signed his death-warrant.

The fool was horrified at this brilliant feast, resounding music, and the mad merriment of the King. He was horrified at the laughing faces and frivolous jests, which came streaming from all those mirthful lips.

My God! They laughed and death was in the midst of them; they laughed—and the gates of the Tower were already opened to admit one of those merry guests of the King into that house, which no one in those days of Henry the Eighth left again, save to go to the stake or to ascend the scaffold!

Who was the condemned? For whom were the soldiers below at the carriage waiting? John Heywood in vain racked his brain with this question.

Nowhere could he spy a trace that might lead him on the right track; nowhere a clue that might conduct him through this labyrinth of horrors!

When you are afraid of the Devil, you do well to put yourself under his immediate protection, muttered John Heywood; and sad and despondent at heart, he crept behind the King's throne and crouched down by it on the ground.

John Heywood had such a little, diminutive form, and the King's throne was so large and broad, that it altogether concealed the little crouching fool.

No one had noticed that John Heywood was concealed there behind the King. Nobody saw his large, keen eyes peeping out from behind the throne and surveying and watching the whole hall.

John Heywood could see everything and hear everything going on in the vicinity of the King. He could observe every one who approached the Queen.

He saw Lady Jane likewise, who was standing by the Queen's seat. He saw how Earl Douglas draw near his daughter, and how she turned deadly pale as he stepped up to her.

John Heywood held his breath and listened.

Earl Douglas stood near his daughter, and nodded to her with a peculiar smile. Go, now, Jane, go and change your dress. It is time. Only see how impatiently and longingly Henry Howard is already looking this way, and with what languishing and enamored glances he seems to give a hint to the Queen. Go then, Jane; and think of your promise.

And will you, my father, also think of your promise? inquired Lady Jane with trembling lips. Will no danger threaten him?

I will, Jane! But now make haste, my daughter, and be prudent and adroit.

Lady Jane bowed, and murmured a few unintelligible words. Then she approached the Queen and begged permission to retire from the feast; because a severe indisposition had suddenly overtaken her.

Lady Jane's countenance was so pale and death-like, that the Queen

might well believe in the indisposition of her first Maid of Honor; and she allowed her to retire.

Lady Jane left the hall. The Queen continued her conversation with Lord Hertford, who was standing by her.

It was a very lively and warm conversation, and the Queen therefore did not heed what was passing around her; and she heard nothing of the conversation between the King and Earl Douglas.

John Heywood, still crouching behind the King's throne, observed everything and heard every word of this softly whispered conversation.

Sire, said Earl Douglas, it is late and the hour of midnight is drawing nigh. Will your Majesty be pleased to conclude the feast? For you well know that at midnight we must be over there in the green summer house, and it is a long way there.

Yes, yes, at midnight! muttered the King. At midnight the carnival is at an end; and we shall tear off our mask, and show our wrathful countenance to the criminals! At midnight we must be over in the green summer-house. Yes, Douglas, we must make haste; for it would be cruel to let the tender Surrey wait still longer. So we will give his Geraldine liberty to leave the feast; and we ourselves must begin our journey. Ah, Douglas, it is a hard path that we have to tread, and the Furies and gods of vengeance bear our torches. To work, then—to work!

The King arose from his seat, and stepped to the Queen, to whom he presented his hand with a tender smile.

My Lady, it is late, said he; and we, who are King of so may subjects—we are, nevertheless, in turn the subject of a King.—This is the physician; and we must obey him. He has ordered me to seek my couch before midnight, and, as a loyal subject must do, I obey. We wish you, therefore, a good night, Kate; and may your beautiful eyes on the morrow also shine as star-like as they do to-night.

They will shine to-morrow as to-night, if my lord and husband is still as gracious to me to-morrow as to-day, said Catharine with perfect artlessness and without embarrassment, as she gave her hand to the King.

Henry cast on her a suspicious, searching look, and a peculiar, malicious expression was manifested in his face.

Do you believe then, Kate, that we can ever be ungracious to you? asked he.

As to that, I think, said she with a smile, that even the sun does not always shine; and that a gloomy night always succeeds his splendor.

The King did not reply. He looked her steadily in the face; and his features suddenly assumed a gentler expression.

Perhaps he had compassion on his young wife. Perhaps he felt pity for her youth and her enchanting smile, which had so often revived and refreshed his heart.

Earl Douglas at least feared so.

Sire, said he, it is late. The hour of midnight is drawing nigh.

Then let us go, exclaimed the King with a sigh. Yet once again,

good night, Kate! Nay, do not accompany me! I will leave the hall quite unobserved; and I shall be pleased, if my guests will still prolong the fair feast till morning. All of you remain here! No one but Douglas accompanies me.

And your brother, the fool! said John Heywood, who long before had come out of his hiding place and was now standing by the King. Yes, come, brother Henry; let us quit this feast. It is not becoming for wise men of our sort to grant our presence still longer to the feast of fools. Come to your couch, King, and I will lull your ear to sleep with the sayings of my wisdom, and enliven your soul with the manna of my learning.

While John Heywood thus spoke, it did not escape him that the features of the Earl suddenly clouded and a dark frown settled on his brow.

Spare your wisdom for to-day, John, said the King; for you would indeed be preaching only to deaf ears. I am tired, and I require not your erudition, but sleep. Good night, John.

The King left the hall, leaning on Earl Douglas's arm.

Earl Douglas does not wish me to accompany the King, whispered John Heywood. He is afraid the King might blab out to me a little of that diabolical work which they will commence at midnight. Well, I call the Devil, as well as the King, my brother, and with his help, I too will be in the green room at midnight. Ah, the Queen is retiring; and there is the Duke of Norfolk leaving the hall. I have a slight longing to see whether the Duke goes hence luckily and without danger, or if the soldiers that stand near the coach, as Wriothesley says, will perchance be the Duke's body-guard for this night.

Slipping out of the hall with the quickness of a cat, John Heywood passed the Duke in the ante-room and hurried on to the outer gateway, before which the carriages were drawn up.

John Heywood leant against a pillar and watched.—A few minutes, and the Duke's tall and proud form appeared in the entrance hall; and the footman, hurrying forwards, called the Duke's carriage.

The carriage rolled up; the door was opened.

Two men wrapped in black mantles sat by the coachman; two others stood behind as footmen, while a fifth was by the open door of the carriage.

The Duke first noticed him, as his foot had already touched the step of the carriage.

This is not my equipage! These are not my people! said he; and he tried to step back. But the pretended servant forced him violently into the carriage and shut the door.

Forwards! ordered he. The carriage rolled on. A moment still, John Heywood saw the Duke's pale face appear at the open carriage-window, and it seemed to him as though he were stretching out his arms, calling for help—then the carriage disappeared in the night.

Poor Duke! murmured John Heywood. The gates of the Tower are heavy, and your arm will not be strong enough to open them again,

when they have once closed behind you. But it avails nothing to think more about him now. The Queen is also in danger! Away then to the Queen!

With fleet foot, John Heywood hastened back into the castle. Through passages and corridors he slipped hurried along.

Now he stood in the corridor which led to the apartments of the Queen.

I will constitute her guard to-night, muttered John Heywood, as he hid himself in one of the niches in the corridor. The fool by his prayers will keep far from the door of his saint the tricks of the Devil, and protect her from the snares which the pious Bishop Gardiner and the crafty courtier Douglas want to lay for her feet. My Queen shall not fall and be ruined. The fool yet lives to protect her.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUEEN.

From the niche in which John Heywood had hid himself, he could survey the entire corridor and all the doors opening into it—could see everything, and hear everything without being himself seen; for the projecting pilaster completely shaded him.

So John Heywood stood and listened. All was quiet in the corridor. In the distance was now and then heard the deadened sound of the music; and the confused hum of many voices from the festive halls forced its way to the listener's ear.

This was the only thing that John Heywood perceived. All else was still.

But this stillness did not last long. The corridor was lighted up, and the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps was heard.

It was the gold-laced lackeys who bore the large silver candelabra to light the Queen, who, with her train of ladies, was passing through the corridor.

She looked wondrously beautiful! The glare of the candles borne before her illumined her countenance, which beamed with cheerfulness. As she passed the pillar behind which John Heywood was standing, she was talking in unrestrained gaiety with her second Maid of Honor; and a clear and lively laugh rung from her lips, which disclosed both rows of her dazzling white teeth. Her eyes sparkled; her cheeks were flushed with a rich red; bright as stars glittered the diamonds in the diadem that encircled her lofty brow; like liquid gold shone her dress of gold brocade, the long trail of which, trimmed with black ermine, was borne by two lovely pages.

Arrived at the door of her bed-chamber, the Queen dismissed her pages and lackeys, and permitted only the Maid of Honor to cross the threshold of her chamber with her.

In harmless gossip, the pages glided down the corridor and the stair-case. Then came the lackeys who bore the candelabra. They also left the corridor.

Now all was quiet again. Still John Heywood stood and listened, firmly resolved to speak to the Queen yet that night, even should he be obliged wake her from sleep. Only he wanted to wait till the Maid of Honor also had left the Queen's room.

Now the door opened, and the Maid of Honor came out. She crossed the corridor to that side where her own apartments were situated. John Heywood heard her open the door and then slide the bolt on the inside.

Now but a brief time longer, and I will go to the Queen, muttered John Heywood.

He was just going to leave his lurking place, when he perceived a noise as if a door was slowly and cautiously opened.

John Heywood cowered again close behind the pillar and held his breath to listen.

A bright light fell over the corridor. A dress came rustling nearer and nearer.

John Heywood gazed astounded and amazed at the figure, which just brushed past without seeing him.

That figure was Lady Jane Douglas.—Lady Jane, who, on account of indisposition, had retired from the feast in order to betake herself to rest. Now, when all rested, she watched—when all laid aside their festive garments, she had adorned herself with the same. Like the Queen, she wore a dress of gold brocade, trimmed with ermine, and like her, a diadem of diamonds adorned Lady Jane's brow.

Now she stood before the Queen's door and listened. Then a fierce sneer flitted across her deathly pale face, and her dark eyes flashed still more.

She sleeps, muttered she. Only sleep, Queen—sleep till we shall come to awake you! Sleep, so that I can wake for you.

She raised her arm threateningly towards the door, and wildly shook her head. Her long black ringlets encircled and danced around her sullen brow like the snakes of the Furies; and pale and colorless, and with demon-like beauty, she resembled altogether the goddess of vengeance, in scornful triumph, preparing to tread her victim beneath her feet.

With a low laugh she now glided adown the corridor, but not to that stair-case yonder, but farther down to the end, where on the wall hung a life-size picture of Henry the Sixth. She pressed on a spring; the picture flew open; and through the door concealed behind it, Lady Jane left the corridor.

She is going to the green-room to a meeting with Henry Howard!

whispered John Heywood, who now stepped forth from behind the pillar. Oh, now I comprehend it all; now the whole of this devilish plot is clear to me; Lady Jane is Earl Surrey's lady-love, and they want to make the King believe that it is the Queen. Doubtless this Surrey is with them in the conspiracy; and perhaps he will call Jane Douglas by the name of the Queen. They will let the King see her but a moment. She wears a gold-brocade dress and a diamond diadem like the Queen; and thereby they hope to deceive Henry. She has the Queen's form precisely; and everybody knows the astonishing similarity and likeness of Lady Jane's voice to that of the Queen. Oh, oh, it is a tolerably cunning plot! But, nevertheless, you shall not succeed, and you shall not yet gain the victory. Patience, only patience! We likewise will be in the green room; and face to face with this royal counterfeit, we will place the genuine Queen!

With hurried step John Heywood also left the corridor which was now lonely and still, for the Queen had gone to rest.

Yes, the Queen slept, and yet over yonder in the green room everything was prepared for her reception.

It was to be a very brilliant and extraordinary reception; for the King, in his own person, had betaken himself to that wing of the castle, and the Chief-Master of Ceremonies, Earl Douglas, had accompanied him.

To the King, this excursion, which he had to make on foot, had been very troublesome; and this inconvenience had made him only still more furious and excited, and the last trace of compassion for his Queen had disappeared from the King's breast, for on Catharine's account he had been obliged to make this long journey to the green room; and with a grim joy Henry thought only how terrible was to be his punishment for Henry Howard and also for Catharine.

Now that Earl Douglas had brought him hither, the King no longer had any doubts at all of the Queen's guilt. It was no longer an accusation—it was proof. For never in the world would Earl Douglas have dared to bring him, the King, hither, if he was not certain that he would give him here infallible proofs.

The King, therefore, no longer doubted; at last Henry Howard was in his power, and he could no more escape him. So he was certain of being able to bring these two hated enemies to the block, and of feeling his sleep no longer disturbed by thoughts of his two powerful rivals.

The Duke of Norfolk had already passed the gates of the Tower, and his son must soon follow him thither.

At this thought the King felt an ecstacy so savage and blood-thirsty, that he wholly forgot that the same sword that was to strike Henry Howard's head, was drawn on his Queen also.

They were now standing in the green room; and the King leant panting and moaning on Earl Douglas's arm.

The large wide room, with its antique furniture and its faded glory, was only gloomily and scantily lighted in the middle by the two wax candles of the candelabrum that Earl Douglas had brought with him;

while further away it was enveloped in deep gloom, and seemed to the eye through this gloom to stretch out to an interminable length.

Through that door over there, comes the Queen, said Douglas; and he himself shrunk at the loud sound of his voice, which in the large, desolate room became of awful fulness. And that there, is Henry Howard's entrance. Oh, he knows that path very thoroughly; for he has often enough already travelled it in the dark night, and his foot no longer stumbles on any stone of offence!

But he will perchance stumble on the headsman's block! muttered the King with a cruel laugh.

I now take the liberty of asking one question more, said Douglas; and the King did not suspect how stormily the Earl's heart beat at this question. Is your Majesty satisfied to see the Earl and the Queen make their appearance at this meeting? Or, do you desire to listen to a little of the Earl's tender protestations?

I will hear not a little, but all! said the King. Ah, let us allow the Earl yet to sing his swan-like song before he plunges into the sea of blood!

Then, said Earl Douglas, then we must put out this light, and your Majesty must be content merely to hear the guilty ones, and not to see them also. We will then betake ourselves to the boudoir here, which I have opened for this purpose, and in which is an easy-chair for your Majesty. We will place this chair near the open door, and then your Majesty will be able to hear every word of their tender whispering.

But how shall we, if we extinguish this our only light, at last attain to a sight of this dear loving pair, and be able to afford them the dramatic surprise of our presence.

Sire, as soon as the Earl of Surrey enters, twenty men of the King's body guard will occupy the ante-room through which the Earl must pass; and it needs but a call from you to have them enter the hall with their torches. I have taken care also, that before the private back gate of the palace two coaches stand ready, the drivers of which know very well the street that leads to the Tower!

Two coaches! said the King laughing. Ah, ah, Douglas, how cruel we are to separate the tender loving pair on this journey which is yet to be their last! Well, perhaps we can compensate them for it, and allow these turtle-doves to make the last trip—the trip to the stake—together. No, no, we will not separate them in death. Together they may lay their heads on the block.

The King laughed, quite delighted with his jest, while, leaning on the Earl's arm, he crossed to the little boudoir on the other side, and took his place in the arm-chair set near the door.

Now we must extinguish the light; and may it please your Majesty to await *in silence* the things that are to come.

The Earl extinguished the light; and deep darkness and a grave-like stillness now followed.

But this did not last long. Now was heard quite distinctly the sound

of footsteps. They came nearer and nearer—now a door was heard to open and shut again, and it was as though some one was creeping softly along on his toes in the hall.

Henry Howard! whispered Douglas.

The King could scarcely restrain the cry of savage malicious delight that forced its way to his lips.

The hated enemy was then in his power; he was convicted of the crime; he was inevitably lost.

Geraldine! whispered a voice, Geraldine!

And as if his low call had already been sufficient to draw hither the loved one, the secret door here quite close to the boudoir opened. The rustling of a dress was very distinctly heard, and the sound of footsteps.

Geraldine! repeated Earl Surrey.

Here I am, my Henry!

With an exclamation of delight, the woman rushed forwards towards the sound of the loved voice.

The Queen! muttered Henry; and in spite of himself he felt his heart seized with bitter grief.

He saw with his inward eye how they held each other in their embrace. He heard their kisses and the low whisper of their tender vows; and all the agonies of jealousy and wrath filled his soul. But yet the King prevailed upon himself to be silent and to swallow down his rage. He wanted to hear everything, to know everything.

He clenched his hands convulsively, and pressed his lips firmly together to hold in his panting breath. He wanted to hear.

How happy they both were! Henry had wholly forgotten that he had come to reproach her for her long silence; she did not think about this being the last time that she might see her lover.

They were with each other, and this hour was theirs. What did the whole world matter to them? What cared they whether or not mischief and ruin threatened them hereafter?

They sat by each other on the divan, quite near the boudoir. They jested and laughed; and Henry Howard kissed away the tears that the happiness of the present caused his Geraldine to shed.

He swore to her eternal and unchanging love. In blissful silence, she drank in the music of his words; and then she reiterated, with jubilant joy, his vows of love.

The King could scarcely restrain his fury.

The heart of Earl Douglas leaped with satisfaction and gratification. A lucky thing that Jane has no suspicion of our presence, thought he—otherwise she would have been less unrestrained and ardent, and the King's ear would have imbibed less poison.

Lady Jane thought not at all of her father; she scarcely remembered that this very night would destroy her hated rival, the Queen.

Henry Howard had called her his Geraldine only. Jane entirely forgot that it was not she to whom her lover had given this name.

But he himself finally reminded her of it.

Do you know, Geraldine, said Earl Surrey, and his voice which had been hitherto so cheerful and sprightly was now sad—do you know, Geraldine, that I have had doubts of you? Oh, those were frightful, horrible hours; and in the agony of my heart, I came at last to the resolution of going to the King and accusing myself of this love that was consuming my heart. Oh, fear naught! I would not have accused you. I would have even denied that love which you have so often and with such transporting reality sworn to me. I would have done it in order to see whether my Geraldine could at last gain courage and strength to acknowledge her love openly and frankly; whether her heart had the power to burst that iron band which the deceitful rules of the world had placed around it; whether she would acknowledge her lover, when he was willing to die for her. Yes, Geraldine, I wanted to do it, that I might finally know which feeling is stronger in you—love, or pride—and whether you could then still preserve the mask of indifference, when death was hovering over your lover's head. Oh, Geraldine, I should deem it a fairer fate to die united with you, than to be obliged to still longer endure this life of constraint and hateful etiquette.

No, no, said she trembling, we will not die. My God, life is indeed so beautiful when you are by my side! And who knows whether a felicitous and blissful future may not still await us?

Oh, should we die, then should we be certain of this blissful future, my Geraldine. There above, there is no more separation—no more renunciation for us. There above, you are mine; and the bloody image of your husband no longer stands between us.

It shall no longer do that, even here on earth, whispered Geraldine. Come, my beloved; let us fly far, far hence, where no one knows us—where we can cast from us all this hated splendor to live for each other and for love.

She threw her arms about her lover, and in the ecstacy of her love she had wholly forgotten, that she could never indeed think to flee with him, that he belonged to her only so long as he saw her not.

An inexplicable anxiety overpowered her heart; and in this anxiety she forgot everything—even the Queen and the vengeance she had vowed.

She now remembered her father's words, and she trembled for her lover's life.

If now her father had not told her the truth—if now he had notwithstanding sacrificed Henry Howard in order to ruin the Queen—if she was not able to save him, and through her fault he were to perish on the scaffold!——

But still this hour was hers, and she would enjoy it.

She clung fast to his breast; she drew him with irresistible force to her heart, which now trembled no longer from love, but from a nameless anxiety.

Let us fly! Let us fly! repeated she breathlessly. See! This hour

is yet ours. Let us avail ourselves of it; for who knows whether the next will still belong to us.

No! it is no longer yours, yelled the King, as he sprang like a roused lion from his seat. Your hours are numbered, and the next already belongs to the hangman!

A piercing shriek burst from Geraldine's lips. Then was heard a dull fall.

She has fainted, muttered Earl Douglas.

Geraldine, Geraldine, my loved one! cried Henry Howard. My God, my God! she is dying! You have killed her! Woe to you!

Woe to yourself! said the King solemnly. Here with the light. Here you folks!

The door of the ante-room opened, and in it appeared four soldiers with torches in their hands.

Light the candles, and guard the door! said the King, whose dazzled eyes were not yet able to bear this bright glare of light, which now suddenly streamed through the room.

The soldiers obeyed his orders. A pause ensued. The King had put his hand before his eyes, and was struggling for breath and self-control.

When at length he let his hand glide down, his features had assumed a perfectly calm—almost a serene expression.

With a hasty glance he surveyed the room. He saw the Queen in her dress glistening with gold; he saw how she lay on the floor, stretched at full length, her face turned to the ground, motionless and rigid.

He saw Henry Howard, who knelt by his beloved and was busy about her with all the anxiety and agony of a lover. He saw how he pressed her hands to his lips; how he put his hand to her head to raise it from the floor.

The King was speechless with rage. He could only lift his arm to beckon the soldiers to approach; to point to Henry Howard who had not yet succeeded in raising the Queen's head from the floor.

Arrest him! said Earl Douglas lending words to the King's mute sign. In the King's name arrest him, and conduct him to the Tower!

Yes, arrest him! said the King; and, as with youthful speed he walked up to Henry Howard and put his hand heavily on his shoulder, he with terrible calmness continued: Henry Howard, your wish shall be fulfilled; you shall mount the scaffold for which you have so much longed!

The Earl's noble countenance remained calm and unmoved; his bright beaming eye fearlessly encountered the eye of the King flashing with wrath.

Sire, said he, my life is in your hand, and I very well know that you will not spare it. I do not even ask you to do so. But spare this noble and beautiful woman, whose only crime is that she has followed the voice of her heart. Sire, I alone am the guilty one. Punish me then—torture me, if you like, but be merciful to her.

The King broke out into a loud laugh. Ah, he begs for her! said he.

This little Earl Surrey presumes to think that his sentimental love-plaint can exercise an influence on the heart of his judge! No, no, Henry Howard; you know me better. You say indeed, that I am a cruel man, and that blood cleaves to my crown. Well now, it is our pleasure to set in our crown a new blood-red ruby; and if we want to take it from Geraldine's heart's blood, your sonnets will not hinder us from doing so, my good little Earl. That is all the reply I have to make to you; and I think it will be the last time that we shall meet on earth!

There above, we shall see each other again, King Henry of England! said Earl Surrey solemnly. There above, Henry the Eighth will no more be the judge, but the condemned criminal; and your bloody and accursed deeds will witness against you!

The King laughed. You avail yourself of your advantage, said he. Because you have nothing more to lose, and the scaffold is sure of you, you do not stick at heaping up the measure of your sins a little more, and you revile your legitimate, God-appointed King! But you should bear in mind, Earl, that before the scaffold there is yet the rack, and that it is very possible indeed that a painful question might there be put to the noble Earl Surrey, to which his agonies might prevent him from returning an answer. Now away with you! We have nothing more to say to each other on earth!

He motioned to the soldiers, who approached the Earl of Surrey. As they reached their hands towards him, he turned on them a look so proud and commanding that they involuntarily recoiled a step.

Follow me! said Henry Howard calmly; and without even deigning the King a single look more, with head proudly erect he walked to the door.

Geraldine still lay on the ground—her face turned to the floor. She stirred not. She seemed to have fallen into a deep swoon.

Only as the door with a sullen sound closed behind Earl Surrey, a low wail and moan was perceived—such as is wont to struggle forth at the last hour from the breast of the dying.

The King did not heed it. He still gazed, with eyes stern and flashing with anger, towards the door through which Earl Surrey had passed.

He is unyielding, muttered he. Not even the rack affrights him; and in his blasphemous haughtiness, he moves along in the midst of the soldiers, not as a prisoner, but as a commander. Oh, these Howards are destined to torment me; and even their death will scarcely be a full satisfaction to me.

Sire, said Earl Douglas, who had observed the King with a keen penetrating eye, and knew that the King had now reached the height of his wrath, at which he shrunk from no deed of violence and no cruelty—Sire, you have sent Earl Surrey to the Tower. But what shall be done with the Queen, who lies there on the floor in a swoon.

The King roused himself from his revery; and his blood-shot eyes were fixed on Geraldine's motionless form with so dark an expression of hate and rage, that Earl Douglas exultingly said to himself: The Queen is lost! He will be inexorable!

Ah, the Queen! cried Henry with a savage laugh. Yea verily, I forgot the Queen! I did not think of this charming Geraldine! But you are right, Douglas, we must think of her and occupy ourselves a little with her! Did you not say that a second coach was ready? Well then, we will not hinder Geraldine from accompanying her beloved. She shall be where he is—in the Tower, and on the scaffold! We will therefore wake this sentimental lady and show her the last duty of a cavalier by conducting her to her carriage!

He was about to approach the figure of the Queen lying on the floor. Earl Douglas held him back.

Sire, said he, it is my duty as your faithful subject, who loves you and trembles for your welfare—it is my duty, to implore you to spare yourself and preserve your precious and adored person from the venemous sting of anger and grief I conjure you, therefore, do not deign to look again on this woman, who has so deeply injured you. Give me your orders—what I am to do with her—and allow me first of all to accompany you to your apartments.

You are right, said the King, she is not worthy of having my eye rest on her again; and she is even too contemptible for my anger! We will call the soldiers that they may conduct this traitoress and adulteress to the Tower, as they have done her paramour!

Yet for that, there is needed still a formality. The Queen will not be admitted into the Tower without the King's written and sealed order.

Then I will draw up that order.

Sire, in that cabinet yonder may be found the necessary writing materials, if it please your Majesty.

The King leant in silence on the Earl's arm, and allowed himself to be led again into the cabinet.

With officious haste, Earl Douglas made the necessary arrangements. He rolled the writing table up to the King; he placed the large sheet of white paper in order, and slipped the pen into the King's hand.

What shall I write? asked the King, who by the exertion of his night excursion, and of his anger and vexation, began at length to be exhausted.

An order for the Queen's imprisonment, Sire.

The King wrote. Earl Douglas stood behind him, with eager attention, in breathless expectation, his looks steadily fixed on the paper over which the King's hand, white, fleshy and sparkling with diamonds, glided along in hasty characters.

He had at length reached his goal. When at last he should hold in his hand the paper, which the King was then writing—when he had induced Henry to return to his apartments before the imprisonment of the Queen had taken place—then was he victorious. Not that woman there, would he then imprison; but, with the warrant in his hand, he would go to the real Queen, and take her to the Tower.

Once in the Tower, the Queen could no longer defend herself; for the King would see her no more; and if before the Parliament she protested her innocence with ever so sacred oaths, still the King's testimony

must convict her; for he had himself surprised her with her paramour.

No, there was no escape for the Queen. She had once succeeded in clearing herself of an accusation, and proving her innocence by a rebutting *alibi*. But this time she was irretrievably lost, and no alibi could deliver her.

The King completed his work and arose, whilst Douglas, at his command, was employed in setting the King's seal to the fatal paper.

From the hall was heard a slight noise, as though some person was cautiously moving about there.

Earl Douglas did not notice it; he was just in the act of pressing the signet hard on the melted sealing-wax.

The King heard it, and supposed that it was Geraldine, and that she was just waking from her swoon and rising.

He stepped to the door of the hall, and looked towards the place where she was lying. But no—she had not yet risen; she still lay stretched at full length on the floor.

She has come to; but she pretends to be still in a swoon, thought the King; and he turned to Douglas.

We are done, said he; the warrant for imprisonment is prepared, and the sentence of the adulterous Queen is spoken. We have done with her forever; and never shall she again behold our face, nor again hear our voice. She is sentenced and damned, and the royal mercy has nothing more to do with this sinner. A curse on the adulteress! A curse on the shameless woman who deceived her husband, and gave herself up to a traitorous paramour! Woe to her, and may shame and disgrace forever mark her name, which——

Suddenly the King stopped and listened. The noise that he had heard just before was now repeated louder and quicker; it came nearer and nearer.

And now the door opened and a figure entered—a figure which made the King stare with astonishment and admiration. It came nearer and nearer—light, graceful, and with the freshness of youth; a gold-brocade dress enveloped it; a diadem of diamonds sparkled on the brow; and brighter yet than the diamonds beamed the eyes.

No, the King was not mistaken. It was the Queen. She was standing before him—and yet she still lay motionless and stiff upon the floor yonder.

The King uttered a cry, and turning pale, reeled a step backward.

The Queen! exclaimed Douglas in terror; and he trembled so violently that the paper in his hand rattled and fluttered.

Yes, the Queen! said Catharine with a haughty smile. The Queen, who comes to scold her husband, that contrary to his physicians orders, he still refrains from his slumbers at so late an hour of the night.

And the fool! said John Heywood, as with humorous pathos he stepped forward from behind the Queen. The fool, who comes to ask Earl Douglas how he dared deprive John Heywood of his office, and usurp

the place of King's fool to Henry, and deceive his most gracious Majesty with all manner of silly pranks and carnival tricks?

And who—asked the King in a voice quivering with rage, fastening his flashing looks on Douglas with an annihilating expression—who, then, is that woman there? Who has dared with such cursed mummery to deceive the King, and calumniate the Queen?

Sire, said Earl Douglas, who very well knew that his future, and that of his daughter, depended on the present moment, and whom this consciousness had speedily restored to his self-possession and calmness—Sire, I beseech your Majesty for a moment of private explanation; and I shall be entirely successful in vindicating myself.

Do not grant it him, brother Henry, said John Heywood; he is a dangerous juggler; and who knows whether he may not yet, in this private conversation, convince you that he is the King, and you, nothing more than his lick spittle, fawning, hypocritical servant Earl Archibald Douglas!

My Lord and husband, I beg you to hear the Earl's justification, said Catharine, as she extended her hand to the King with a bewitching smile. It would be cruel to condemn him unheard.

I will hear him, but it shall be done in your presence, Kate; and you yourself shall decide whether or not his justification is sufficient.

No indeed, my husband; let me remain an entire stranger to this night's conspiracy, so that spite and anger may not fill my heart and rob me of the serene confidence, which I need to be able to walk on at your side happy and smiling in the midst of my enemies.

You are right, Kate, said the King thoughtfully. You have many enemies at our Court; and we have to accuse ourselves, that we have not always succeeded in stopping our ear to their malicious whisperings, and in keeping ourselves pure from the poisonous breath of their calumny. Our heart is still too artless, and we cannot even yet comprehend, that men are a disgusting, corrupt race, which one should tread beneath his feet, but never take to his heart. Come, Earl Douglas, I will hear you; but woe to you, if you are unable to justify yourself.

He retired to the embrasure of the large window of the boudoir. Earl Douglas followed him thither, and let the heavy velvet curtain drop behind them.

Sire, said he hardily and resolutely, the question now is this—whose head would you rather give over to the executioner—mine, or the Earl of Surrey's? You have the choice between the two. You are aware, that I have ventured for a moment to deceive you. Well, send me to the Tower then, and set free the noble Henry Howard, that he may henceforth disturb your sleep and poison your days; that he may further court the love of the people, and perhaps some day rob your son of the throne that belongs to him. Here is my head, Sire; it is forfeited to the headman's axe, and Earl Surrey is free!

No, he is not free, and shall never be! said the King grinding his teeth.

Then, my King, I am justified; and instead of being angry with me,

you will thank me! It is true I played a hazardous game, but I did so in the service of my King. I did it because I loved him, and because I read on your lofty clouded brow the thoughts that begirt with darkness my master's soul, and disturbed the sleep of his nights. You wanted to have Henry Howard in your power; and this crafty and hypocritical Earl knew how to conceal his guilt so securely under the mask of virtue and loftiness of soul. But I knew him, and behind this mask I had seen his face distorted with passion and crime. I wanted to unmask him; but for this, it was necessary that I should deceive first him, and then for the hour even you yourself. I knew that he burned with an adulterous love for the Queen, and I wanted to avail myself of the madness of this passion, in order to bring him surely and unavoidably to richly deserved punishment. But I would not draw the pure and exalted person of the Queen into this net with which we wanted to surround Earl Surrey. I was obliged, then, to seek a substitute for her; and I did so There was at your Court a woman whose whole heart belongs, after God, to the King alone; and who so much adores him, that she would be ready any hour gladly to sacrifice for the King her heart's blood, her whole being—aye, if need be, even her honor itself—a woman, Sire, who lives by your smile, and worships you as her redeemer and saviour—a woman, whom you might, as you pleased, make a saint or a strumpet; and who, to please you, would be a shameless Phryne, or a chaste veiled nun.

Tell me her name, Douglas, said the King, tell me it! It is a rare and precious stroke of fortune to be so loved; and it would be a sin not to want to enjoy this good fortune.

Sire, I will tell you her name when you have first forgiven me, said Douglas, whose heart leaped for joy, and who well understood that the King's anger was already mollified and the danger now almost overcome. I said to this woman: "You are to do the King a great service; you are to deliver him from a powerful and dangerous foe! You are to save him from Henry Howard!"—Tell me what I must do! cried she, her looks beaming with joy.—"Henry Howard loves the Queen. You must be the Queen to him. You must receive his letters, and answer them in the Queen's name. You must grant him interviews by night, and, favored by the darkness of the night, make him believe that it is the Queen whom he holds in his arms. He must be convinced that the Queen is his lady-love; and in his thoughts, as in his deeds, he must be placed before the King as a traitor and criminal whose head is forfeited to the headsman's axe. One day we will let the King be a witness of a meeting that Henry Howard believes he has with the Queen; it will then be in his power to punish his enemy for his criminal passion, which is worthy of death!" And as I thus spoke to the woman, Sire, she said with a sad smile: It is a disgraceful and dishonorable part that you assign me; but I undertake it, for you say I may thereby render a service to the King. I shall disgrace myself for him; but he will perhaps bestow upon me in return a gracious smile; and then I shall be abundantly rewarded.

But this woman is an angel! cried the King ardently. An angel whom we should kneel to and adore, Douglas. Tell me her name, Douglas!

Sire, as soon as you have forgiven me! You know now all my guilt and all my crime. For, as I bade that noble woman, so it came to pass, and Henry Howard has gone to the Tower in the firm belief that it was the Queen whom he just now held in his arms.

But why did you leave me in this belief, Douglas? Why did you fill my heart with wrath against the noble and virtuous Queen also?

Sire, I dared not reveal this deception to you before you had sentenced Surrey, for your noble and just moral sense would have been reluctant to punish him on account of a crime that he had not committed; and in your first wrath, you would have also blamed this noble woman, who has sacrificed herself for her King.

It is true, said the King, I should have misjudged this noble woman, and instead of thanking her, I should have destroyed her.

Therefore, my King, I quietly allowed you to make out an order for the Queen's incarceration. But you remember well, Sire, I begged you to return to your apartments before the Queen was arrested. Well now, *there* I should have disclosed to you the whole secret, which I could not tell you in the presence of that woman. For she would die of shame, if she suspected that you knew of her love for the King, so pure and self-sacrificing, and cherished in such heroic silence!

She shall never know it, Douglas! But now at length satisfy my desire. Tell me her name.

Sire, you have forgiven me, then? You are no longer angry with me that I dared to deceive you?

I am no longer angry with you, Douglas; for you have acted rightly. The plan, which you have contrived and carried out with such happy result, was as crafty as it was daring.

I thank you, Sire; and I will now tell you the name. That woman, Sire, who at my wish gave herself up a sacrifice to this adulterous Earl, who endured his kisses, his embraces, his vows of love, in order to render a service to her King—that woman was my daughter, Lady Jane Douglas!

Lady Jane? cried the King. No, no, this is a new deception. That haughty, chaste and unapproachable Lady Jane—that wonderfully beautiful marble statue really has then a heart in her breast, and that heart belongs to me? Lady Jane, the pure and chaste virgin, has made for me this prodigious sacrifice, of receiving this hated Surrey as her lover, in order, like a second Delilah, to deliver him unto my hand? No, Douglas, you are lying to me. Lady Jane has not done that!

May it please your Majesty to go yourself and take a look at that fainting woman, who was to Henry Howard, the Queen.

The King did not reply to him; but drew back the curtain and re-entered the cabinet, in which the Queen was waiting with John Heywood.

Henry did not notice them. With youthful precipitation, he crossed the cabinet and the hall. Now he stood by the figure of Geraldine still lying on the floor.

She was no longer in a swoon. She had long since regained her consciousness; and terrible were the agonies and tortures that rent her heart. Henry Howard had incurred the penalty of the headsman's axe, and it was she that had betrayed him.

But her father had sworn to her that she should save her lover.

She durst not die then. She must live to deliver Henry Howard.

There was burning, as it were, the fires of hell in her poor heart; but she was not at liberty to heed these pains. She could not think of *herself*—only of *him*—of Henry Howard, whom she must deliver, whom she must save from death.

For *him* she sent up her fervent prayers to God; for him her heart trembled with anxiety and agony, as the King now advanced to her, and bending down, gazed into her eyes with a strange expression at once scrutinizing and smiling.

Lady Jane, said he then, as he presented her his hand, arise from the ground and allow your King to express to you his thanks for your sublime and wonderful sacrifice! Verily, it is a fair lot to be a King; for then one has at least the power of punishing traitors, and of rewarding those that serve us. I have to-day done the one, and I will not neglect to do the other also. Stand up, then, Lady Jane; it does not become you to lie on your knees before me!

Oh, let me kneel, my King, said she passionately; let me beseech you for mercy, for pity! Have compassion, King Henry—compassion on the anxiety and agony which I endure. It is not possible that this is all a reality; that this juggling is to be changed into such terrible earnest! Tell me, King Henry—I conjure you by the agonies which I suffer for your sake—tell me, what will you do with Henry Howard? Why have you sent him to the Tower?

To punish the traitor as he deserves, said the King, and he cast a dark and angry look across at Douglas, who had also approached his daughter, and was now standing close by her.

Lady Jane uttered a heart-rending cry, and sank down again, senseless and completely exhausted.

The King frowned. It is possible, said he—and I almost believe it—that I have been deceived in many ways this evening, and that now again my guilelessness has been played upon in order to impose upon me a charming story. However, I have given my word to pardon; and it shall not be said that Henry the Eighth, who calls himself God's protector, has ever broken his word; nor even that he has punished those whom he has assured of exemption from punishment.

My Lord Douglas, I will fulfill my promise. I forgive you.

He extended his hand to Douglas, who kissed it fervently. The King bent down closer to him. Douglas, whispered he, you are as cunning as a serpent; and I now see through your artfully woven web! You

wanted to destroy Surrey, but the Queen was to sink into the abyss with him. Because I am indebted to you for Surrey, I forgive you what you have done to the Queen. But take heed to yourself, take heed that I do not meet you again on the same track; do not ever try again, by a look, a word, aye, even by a smile, to cast suspicion on the Queen. The slightest attempt would cost you your life! That I swear to you by the Holy Mother of God; and you know that I have never yet broken that oath. As regards Lady Jane, we do not want to consider that she has misused the name of our illustrious and virtuous consort in order to draw this lustful and adulterous Earl into the net which you had set for him; she obeyed your orders, Douglas; and we will not now decide, what other motives besides have urged her to this deed. She may settle that with God and her own conscience, and it does not behoove us to decide about it.

But it behooves me, perhaps, my husband, to ask by what right Lady Jane has dared to appear here in this attire, and to present to a certain degree a counterfeit of her Queen? asked Catharine in a sharp tone. I may well be allowed to ask, what has made my Maid of Honor, who left the festive hall sick, now all at once so well that she goes roaming about the castle in the night time, and in a dress which seems likely to be mistaken for mine. Sire, was this dress perchance a craftily devised stratagem, in order to really confound us with one another? You are silent, my lord and King. It is true, then, they have wanted to carry out a terrible plot against me; and without the assistance of my faithful and honest friend, John Heywood, who brought me here, I should without doubt be now condemned and lost, as the Earl of Surrey is.

Ah, John, it was you then that brought a little light into this darkness? cried the King with a cheerful laugh, as he laid his hand on Heywood's shoulder. Now, verily, what the wise and prudent did not see, that the fool has seen through!

King Henry of England, said John Heywood solemnly, many call themselves wise, and yet they are fools; and many assume the mask of folly, because fools only are allowed to be wise.

Kate, said the King, you are right; this was a bad night for you, but God and the fool have saved you and me. We will both be thankful for it. But it is well if you do as you before wished, and ask and inquire nothing more concerning the mysteries of this night. It was brave in you to come here, and I will be mindful of it. Come, my little Queen, give me your arm and conduct me to my apartments. I tell you, child, it gives me joy to be able to lean on your arm, and see your dear sprightly face blenched by no fear, or terrors of conscience. Come, Kate, you alone shall lead me, and to you alone will I trust myself.

Sire, you are too heavy for the Queen, said the fool, as he put his neck under the other arm. Let me share with her the burden of royalty.

But before we go, said Catharine, I have, my husband, one request! Will you grant it?

I will grant everything that you may ask, provided you will not require me to send you to the Tower.

Sire, I wish to dismiss my Maid of Honor, Lady Jane Douglas, from my service—that is all, said the Queen, as her eyes glanced with an expression of contempt, and yet at the same time of pain, at the form of her friend of other days, prostrate on the floor.

She is dismissed! said the King. You will choose another Maid of Honor to-morrow. Come, Kate!

And the King, supported by his consort and John Heywood, left the room with slow and heavy steps.

Earl Douglas watched them with a sullen hateful expression. As the door closed after them he raised his arm threateningly towards heaven, and his trembling lips uttered a fierce curse and execration.

Vanquished! vanquished again! muttered he gnashing his teeth. Humbled by this woman, whom I hate, and whom I will yet destroy! Yes, she has conquered this time; but we will commence the struggle anew, and our envenomed weapon shall nevertheless strike her at last!

Suddenly he felt a hand laid heavily on his shoulder, and a pair of glaring, flaming eyes gazed at him.

Father, said Lady Jane, as she threw her right hand threateningly towards heaven—father, as true as there is a God above us, I will accuse you yourself to the King as a traitor—I will betray to him all your accursed plots, if you do not help me to deliver Henry Howard.

Her father looked with an expression almost melancholy in her face, painfully convulsed and pale as marble. I will help you! said he. I will do it, if you will help me also, and further my plans.

Oh, only save Henry Howard, and I will sign myself away to the Devil with my heart's blood! said Jane Douglas with a horrible smile. Save his life, or if you have not the power to do that, then at least procure me the happiness of being able to die with him.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDECEIVED.

Parliament, which had not for a long time now ventured to offer any further opposition to the King's will—Parliament had acquiesced in his decree. It had accused Earl Surrey of high treason; and on the sole testimony of his mother and his sister, he had been declared guilty of *laesa majestas* and high treason. A few words of discontent at his removal from office, some complaining remarks about the numerous ex-

ecution's that drenched England's soil with blood—that was all that the Duchess of Richmond had been able to bring against him. That he, like his father, bore the arms of the Kings of England—that was the only evidence of high treason of which his mother, the Duchess of Norfolk, could charge him.*

These accusations were of so trivial a character, that the Parliament well knew they were not the ground of his arrest, but only a pretext for it.—Only a pretext, by which the King said to his pliant and trembling Parliament: This man is innocent; but I will that you condemn him; and, therefore, you will account the accusation sufficient

Parliament had not the courage to oppose the King's will. These members of Parliament were nothing more than a flock of sheep, who, in trembling dread of the sharp teeth of the dog, go straight along the path which the dog shows them.

The King wanted them to condemn the Earl of Surrey; and they condemned him.

They summoned him before their judgment seat, and it was in vain, that he proved his innocence in a speech spirited and glowing with eloquence. These noble members of Parliament would not see that he was innocent.

It is true, indeed, there were a few who were ashamed to bow their heads so unreservedly beneath the King's sceptre, which dripped with blood like a headsman's axe. There were still a few to whom the accusation appeared insufficient; but they were outvoted; and in order to give Parliament a warning example, the King, on the very same day, had these obstinate ones arrested and accused of some pretended crime. For this people, enslaved by the King's cruelty and savage barbarity, was already so degenerate and debased in self-consciousness, that men were always and without trouble found, who, in order to please the King and his blood-thirstiness and sanctimonious hypocrisy, degraded themselves to informers, and accused of crime those whom the King's dark frown had indicated to them as offenders.

So Parliament had doomed the Earl of Surrey to die, and the King had signed his death-warrant.

Early next morning he was to be executed; and in the Tower yard the workmen were already busy in erecting the scaffold on which the noble Earl was to be beheaded.

Henry Howard was alone in his cell. He had done with life and earthly things. He had set his house in order and made his will; he had written to his mother and sister, and forgiven them for their treachery and accusation; he had addressed a letter to his father, in which he exhorted him, in words as noble as they were touching, to steadfastness and calmness, and bade him not to weep for him, for death was his desire, and the grave the only refuge for which he longed.

He had then, as we have said, done with life; and earthly things no longer disturbed him. He felt no regret and no fear. Life had left

*Tytler, page 402. Burnet, vol. 1, page 95.

him nothing more to wish; and he almost thanked the King that he would so soon deliver him from the burthen of existence.

The future had nothing more to offer him; why then should he desire it? Why long for a life, which could be for him now only an isolated, desolate, and gloomy one? For Geraldine was lost to him! He knew not her fate; and no tidings of her had penetrated to him through the solitary prison walls. Did the Queen still live? Or had the King in his wrath murdered her on that very night when Henry was carried to the Tower, and his last look beheld his beloved lying at her husband's feet swooning and rigid?

What had become of the Queen—of Henry Howard's beloved Geraldine. He knew nothing of her. He had hoped in vain for some note, some message from her; but he had not dared to ask any one as to her fate Perhaps the King desisted from punishing her likewise. Perhaps his murderous inclination had been satisfied by putting Henry Howard to death; and Catharine escaped the scaffold. It might, therefore, have been ruinous to her, had he, the condemned, inquired after her. Or if she had gone before him, then he was certain of finding her again there above, and of being united with her forever and forevermore beyond the grave.

He believed in a hereafter, for he loved; and death did not affright him, for after death came the reunion with her, with Geraldine, who either was already waiting for him there above, or would soon follow him.

Life had nothing more to offer him. Death united him to his beloved. He hailed death as his friend and saviour, as the priest who was to unite him to his Geraldine.

He heard the great tower clock of the prison, which with threatening stroke made known the hour; and each passing hour he hailed with a joyous throb of the heart. The evening came and deep night descended upon him.—The last night that was allotted to him.—The last night that separated him from his Geraldine.

The turnkey opened the door to bring the Earl a light, and to ask whether he had any orders to give. Heretofore it had been the King's special command not to allow him a light in his cell; and he had spent these six long evenings and nights of his imprisonment in darkness. But to-day they were willing to give him a light; to-day they were willing to allow him everything that he might still desire. The life, which he must leave in a few hours, was to be once more adorned for him with all charms and enjoyments, which he might ask for. Henry Howard had but to wish, and the jailer was ready to furnish him everything.

But Henry Howard wished for nothing; he demanded nothing, save that they would leave him alone—save that they would remove from his prison, this light which dazzled him, and which opposed to his enrapturing dreams the disenchanting reality.

The King, who had wanted to impose a special punishment in con-

demning him to darkness—the King had, contrary to his intention, become thereby his benefactor. For with darkness came dreams and phantosies. With the darkness came Geraldine.

When night and silence were all around him, then there was light within; and an enchanting whisper and a sweet enticing voice resounded within him. The gates of his prison sprang open, and on the wings of thought Henry Howard soared away from that dismal and desolate place. On the wings of thought he came to *her*—to his Geraldine.

Again she was by him, in the large, silent hall. Again night lay upon them, like a veil concealing, blessing and enveloping them; and threw its protection over their embraces and their kisses. Solitude allowed him to hear again the dear music of her voice, which sang for him so enchanting a melody of love and ecstacy.

Henry Howard must be alone, so that he can hear his Geraldine. Deep darkness must surround him, so that his Geraldine can come to him.

He demanded, therefore, for his last night, nothing farther than to be left alone, and without a light. The jailer extinguished the light, and left the cell. But he did not shove the great iron bolt across the door. He did not put the large padlock on it, but he only left the door slightly ajar and did not lock it all.

Henry Howard took no notice of this. What cared he, whether this gate was locked or no—he who no longer had a desire for life and freedom!

He leant back on his seat, and dreamed with eyes open. There below in the yard, they were working on the scaffold which Henry Howard was to ascend as soon as day dawned. The dull monotony of the strokes of the hammers fell on his ear. Now and then the torches, which lighted the workmen at their melancholy task, allowed to shine up into his cell a pale glimmer of light, which danced on the walls in ghost like shapes.

There are the ghosts of all those whom Henry has put to death, thought Henry Howard; they gather around me, like will-o'-the-wisps; they dance with me the dance of death, and in a few hours I shall be forever theirs.

The dull noise of hammers and saws continued steadily on; and Henry Howard sunk deeper and deeper in revery.

He thought, he felt, and desired nothing but Geraldine. His whole soul was concentrated in that single thought of *her*. It seemed to him that he could bid his spirit see her, as though he could command his senses to perceive her. Yes, she was there; he felt—he was conscious of her presence. Again he lay at her feet, and leant his head on her knee, and listened again to those charming revelations of her love.

Completely borne away from the present, and from existence, he saw, he felt, only *her*. The mystery of love was perfected, and under the veil of night, Geraldine had again winged her way to him, and he to her.

A happy smile played about his lips, which faltered forth rapturous

words of greeting. Overcome by a wonderful hallucination, he saw his beloved approaching him; he stretched out his arms to clasp her; and it did not arouse him when he felt instead of her only the empty air.

Why do you float away from me again, Geraldine? asked he in a low tone. Wherefore do you withdraw from my arms, to whirl with the will-o'-the-wisps in the death-dance? Come, Geraldine, come; my soul burns for you. My heart calls you with its last faltering throb. Come, Geraldine, oh, come.

What was that? It was as though the door was gently opened, and the latch again gently fastened. It was as though a foot was moving softly over the floor—as though the shape of a human form shaded for a moment the flickering light which danced around the walls.

Henry Howard saw it not.

He saw naught but his Geraldine, whom he with so much fervency and longing wished by his side. He spread his arms; he called her with all the ardor, all the enthusiasm of a lover.

Now he uttered a cry of ecstacy. His prayer of love was answered. The dream had become a reality. His arms no longer clasped the empty air; they pressed to his breast the woman whom he loved, and for whom he was to die.

He pressed his lips to her mouth and he returned her kisses. He threw his arms around her form, and she pressed him fast, fast to her bosom.

Was this a reality? Or was it madness that was creeping upon him and seizing upon his brain, and deceiving him with phantasies so enchanting?

Henry Howard shuddered as he thought this, and falling upon his knees, he cried in a voice trembling with agony and love: Geraldine, have pity on me! Tell me, that this is no dream, that I am not mad. That you are really—you are Geraldine—you—the King's consort, whose knees I now clasp! Speak, oh, speak, my Geraldine.

I am she! softly whispered she. I am Geraldine—am the woman whom you love, and to whom you have sworn eternal truth and eternal love! Henry Howard, my beloved, I now remind you of your oath! Your life belongs to me. This you have vowed, and I now come to demand of you that which is my own!

Aye, my life belongs to you, Geraldine! But it is a miserable, melancholy possession, which you will call yours only a few hours longer!

She threw her arms closely around his neck; she raised him to her heart; she kissed his mouth, his eyes. He felt her tears, which trickled like hot fountains over his face; he heard her sighs, which struggled from her breast like death groans.

You must not die! murmured she amid her tears. No, Henry, you must live, so that I too can live; so that I shall not become mad from agony and sorrow for you! My God, my God, do you not then feel how I love you? Know you not then, that your life is my life, and your death my death?

He leant his head on her shoulder, and, wholly intoxicated with happiness, he scarcely heard what she was speaking.

She was again there! What cared he for all the rest?

Geraldine, softly whispered he, do you recollect still how we first met each other? How our hearts were united in one throb, how our lips clung to each other in one kiss? Geraldine, my wife, my loved one, we then swore that naught could separate us, that our love should survive the grave! Geraldine, do you remember that still?

I remember it, my Henry! But you shall not die yet; and not in death, but in life, shall your love for me be proved! Aye, we will live, live! And *your* life shall be *my* life, and where *you* are, there will I be also! Henry, do you remember, that you vowed this to me with a solemn oath?

I remember it, but I cannot keep my word, my Geraldine! Hear you how they are sawing and hammering there below? Know you what that indicates, dearest?

I know it, Henry! It is the scaffold that they are building there below. The scaffold for you and me. For I too will die if you will not live; and the axe that seeks your neck, shall find mine also, if you wish not that we both live!

Do I wish it! But how can we, beloved?

We can! Henry, we can! All is ready for the flight! It is all arranged, everything prepared! The King's signet-ring has opened to me the gates of the prison; the omnipotence of gold has won over your jailer. He will not see it, when two persons instead of one leave this dungeon. Unmolested and without hinderance, we will both leave the Tower by ways known only to him, over secret corridors and stair-cases, and will go aboard a boat which is ready to take us to a ship, which lies in the harbor prepared to sail, and which, as soon as we are aboard, weighs anchor and puts to sea with us. Come, Henry, come! Lay your arm in mine, and let us leave this prison!

She threw both her arms around his neck, and drew him forwards. He pressed her fast to his heart and whispered: Yes, come, come, my beloved. Let us fly! To you belongs my life, you alone!

He raised her up in his arms, and hastened with her to the door. He pushed it hastily open with his foot and hurried forwards down the cor ridor. But having arrived just at the first turn of the same, he reeled back in horror.

Before the door were standing soldiers with shouldered arms. There stood also the Lieutenant of the Tower, and two servants behind him with lighted candles.

Geraldine gave a scream and with anxious haste rearranged the thick veil that had slipped from her head.

Henry Howard also had uttered a cry, but not on account of the soldiers, and the frustrated flight.

His eyes, stretched wide open, stared at this figure at his side, now so closely veiled.

It seemed to him, as though like a spectre a strange face had risen up close by him—as though it was not the beloved head of the Queen, that rested there on his shoulder. He had seen this face only as a vision, as the fantasy of a dream; but he knew with perfect certainty that it was not *her* countenance, not the countenance of his Geraldine.

The Lieutenant of the Tower motioned to his servants, and they carried the lighted candles into the Earl's cell.

Then he gave Henry Howard his hand and silently led him back into the prison.

Henry Howard exhibited no reluctance to follow him; but his hand had seized Geraldine's arm, and he drew her along with him; his eye rested on her with a penetrating expression, and seemed to threaten her.

They were now again in the room, which they had before left with such blessed hopes.

The Lieutenant of the Tower motioned to the servants to retire, then turned with solemn earnestness to Earl Surrey.

My Lord, said he, it is at the King's command, that I bring you these lights. His Majesty knows all that has happened here this night. He knew that a plot was formed to rescue you; and while they believed they were deceiving him, the plotters themselves were deceived. They had succeeded under various artful false pretences in influencing the King to give his signet-ring to one of his lords. But his Majesty was already warned, and he already knew that it was not a man, as they wanted to make him believe, but a woman, who came, not to take leave of you, but to deliver you from prison. My Lady, the jailer, whom you imagined that you had bribed, was a faithful servant of the King. He betrayed your plot to me; and it was I who ordered him to make a show of favoring your deed. You will not be able to release Earl Surrey; but if such is your command, I will myself see you to the ship that lies in the harbor for you ready to sail. No one will hinder you, my Lady, from embarking on it; Earl Surrey is not permitted to accompany you!—My Lord, soon the night is at an end, and you know that it will be your last night. The King has ordered, that I am not to prevent this Lady, if she wishes to spend this night with you in your room. But she is allowed to do so only on the condition that the lights in your room remain burning. That is the King's express will, and these are his own words: Tell Earl Surrey that I allow him to love his Geraldine, but that he is to open his eyes to see her!—That he may see, you will give him a light; and I command him not to extinguish it so long as Geraldine is with him. Otherwise he may confound her with another woman; for in the dark one cannot distinguish even a harlequin from a queen!—You have now to decide, my Lord, whether this lady remains with you, or whether she goes, and the light shall be put out!

She shall remain with me, and I very much need the light! said Earl Surrey; and his penetrating look rested steadily on the veiled figure, which shook at his words, as if in an ague.

Have you any other wish, besides this, my Lord?

None, save that I may be left alone with her.

The Lieutenant bowed and left the room.

They were now alone again, and stood confronting each other in silence. Naught was heard but the beating of their hearts, and the sighs of anguish that burst from Geraldine's trembling lips.

It was an awful, a terrible pause. Geraldine would have gladly given her life could she thereby have extinguished the light and veiled herself in impenetrable darkness.

But the Earl would see. With an angry, haughty look, he stepped up to her, and as with commanding gesture he raised his arm, Geraldine shuddered and submissively bowed her head.

Unveil your face! said he in a tone of command.

She did not stir. She murmured a prayer, then raised her clasped hands to Henry and in a low moan, said: Mercy! mercy!

He extended his hand and seized the veil.

Mercy! repeated she in a voice of still deeper supplication—of still greater distress.

But he was inexorable. He tore the veil from her face, and stared at her. Then with a wild shriek he reeled back and covered his face with his hands.

Jane Douglas durst not breathe or stir. She was pale as marble; her large burning eyes were fastened with an unutterable expression of entreaty upon her lover, who stood before her, with covered head, and crushed with anguish. She loved him more than her life, more than her eternal salvation; and yet she it was that had brought him to this hour of agony.

At length Earl Surrey let his hands fall from his face, and with a fierce movement dashed the tears from his eyes.

As he looked at her, Jane Douglas wholly involuntarily sunk upon her knees, and raised her hands imploringly to him. Henry Howard, said she in a low whisper: I am she, I am Geraldine! Me have you loved; my letters have you read with ecstacy, and to me have you often sworn, that you loved my mind yet more than my appearance. And often has my heart been filled with rapture, when you told me you would love me however my face might change, however old age or sickness might alter my features. You remember, Henry, how I once asked you whether you would cease to love me, if now God suddenly put a mask before my face, so that you could not recognise my features? You replied to me: "Nevertheless, I should love and adore you; for what in you ravishes me, is not your face, but you yourself—yourself with your glorious being and nature. It is your soul and your heart which can never change, which lie before me like a holy book, clear and bright!" That was your reply to me then, as you swore to love me eternally. Henry Howard, I now remind you of your oath! I am your Geraldine. It is the same soul, the same heart; only God has put a mask upon my face!

Earl Surrey had listened to her with eager attention, with increasing amazement.

It is she! It is really! cried he, as she ceased. It is Geraldine!

And wholly overcome, wholly speechless with anguish, he sank into a seat.

Geraldine flew to him; she crouched at his feet; she seized his drooping hand and covered it with kisses. And amid streaming tears, often interrupted by her sighs and her sobs, she recounted to him the sad and unhappy history of her love; she unveiled before him the whole web of cunning and deceit, that her father had drawn around them both. She laid her whole heart open and unveiled before him. She told him of her love, of her agonies, of her ambition and her remorse. She accused herself; but she plead her love as an excuse, and with streaming tears clinging to his knees, she implored him for pity, for forgiveness.

He thrust her violently from him and stood up in order to escape her touch. His noble countenance glowed with anger; his eyes darted lightning; his long flowing hair shaded his lofty brow and his face like a sombre veil. He was beautiful in his wrath, beautiful as the angel Michael trampling the dragon beneath his feet. And thus he bent down his head towards her; thus he gazed at her with flashing and contemptuous looks.

I forgive you? said he. Never will that be! Ha, shall I forgive you?—you, who have made my entire life a ridiculous lie, and transformed the tragedy of my love into a disgusting farce? Oh, Geraldine, how I have loved you; and now you have become to me a loathsome spectre, before which my soul shudders, and which I must execrate. You have crushed my life, and even robbed my death of its sanctity; for now it is no longer the martyrdom of my love, but only the savage mockery of my credulous heart. Oh, Geraldine, how beautiful it would have been to die for you!—To go to death with your name upon my lips!—To bless you!—To thank you for my happy lot, as the axe was already uplifted to smite off my head! How beautiful to think that death does not separate us, but is only the way to an eternal union; that we should lose each other but a brief moment here, to find each other again forevermore there above!

Geraldine writhed at his feet like a worm trodden upon; and her groans of distress and her smothered moans were the heart-rending accompaniment of his melancholy words.

But that is now all over! cried Henry Howard; and his face, which was before convulsed with grief and agony, now glowed again with wrath. You have poisoned my life and my death; and I shall curse you for it, and my last word will be a malediction on the harlequin Geraldine!

Have pity! groaned Jane. Kill me, Henry; stamp my head beneath your feet; only let this torture end!

Nay, no pity! yelled he wildly; no pity for this imposter, who has stolen my heart and crept like a thief into my love! Arise and leave

this room; for you fill me with horror; and when I behold you, I feel only that I must curse you! Aye, a curse on you and shame, Geraldine. Curse on the kisses that I have impressed on your lips—on the tears of rapture that I have wept on your bosom. When I ascend the scaffold, I will curse you, and my last word shall be: Woe to Geraldine! For she is my murderess!

He stood there before her with arm raised on high, proud and great in his wrath. She felt the destroying lightning of his eyes, though she durst not look up at him, but lay at his feet moaning and convulsed, and concealing her face in her veil, as she shuddered at her own picture.

And this be my last word to you, Geraldine, said Henry Howard panting for breath: Go hence under the burthen of my curse, and live —if you can!

She unveiled her head, and raised her countenance to him. A contemptuous smile writhed about her deathly pale lips. Live? said she. Have we not sworn to die with each other? Your curse does not release me from my oath, and when you descend into the grave, Jane Douglas will stand upon its brink, to wail and weep until you make a little place for her there below; until she has softened your heart and you take her again, as your Geraldine, into your grave. Oh, Henry! In the grave, I no longer wear the face of Jane Douglas—that hated face, which I would tear with my nails. In the grave, I am Geraldine again. There I may again lie close to your heart, and again you will say to me: "I love not your face and your external form! I love you yourself; I love your heart and mind; and that can never change, and can never be otherwise!"

Silence! said he roughly; silence, if you do not want me to run mad! Cast not my own words in my face. They defile me, for falsehood has desecrated them and trodden them in the mire. No! I will not make room for you in my grave. I will not again call you Geraldine. You are Jane Douglas, and I hate you, and I hurl my curse on your criminal head! I tell you——

He suddenly paused, and a slight convulsion ran through his whole frame.

Jane Douglas uttered a piercing scream and sprang from her knees.

Day had broken; and from the prison tower sounded the dismal, plaintive stroke of the death-bell.

Do you hear, Jane Douglas? said Surrey. That bell summons me to death. You it is that has poisoned my last hour. I was happy, when I loved you. I die in despair, for I despise and hate you.

No, no, you dare not die! cried she, clinging to him with passionate anguish You dare not go to the grave with that fierce curse upon your lips. I cannot be your murderess. Oh, it is not possible that they will put you to death—you, the beautiful, the noble and virtuous Earl Surrey. My God, what have you done to excite their wrath? You are innocent; and they know it. They cannot execute you; for it would be murder! You have committed no offence; you have been guilty of

nothing; no crime attaches to your noble person. It is indeed no crime to love Jane Douglas, and me have you loved—me alone.

No, not you, said he proudly; I have nothing to do with Lady Jane Douglas. I loved the Queen, and I believed she returned my love. That is my crime.

The door opened; and in solemn silence the Lieutenant of the Tower entered with the priests and his assistants. In the door was seen the bright red dress of the headsman, who was standing upon the threshold with face calm and unmoved.

It is time! solemnly said the Lieutenant.

The priest muttered his prayers, and the assistants swung their censers. Without, the death-bell kept up its wail; and from the court was heard the hum of the mob, which, curious and blood thirsty as it ever is, had streamed hither to behold with laughing mouth the blood of the man who but yesterday was its favorite.

Earl Surrey stood there a moment in silence. His features worked and were convulsed, and a death-like pallor covered his cheeks.

He trembled not at death, but at dying. It seemed to him, that he already felt on his neck the cold broad-axe which that frightful man there held in his hand. Oh, to die on the battle-field—what a boon it would have been! To come to an end on the scaffold—what a disgrace was this!

Henry Howard, my son, are you prepared to die? asked the priest. Have you made your peace with God? Do you repent you of your sins, and do you acknowledge death as a righteous expiation and punishment? Do you forgive your enemies, and depart hence at peace with yourself and with mankind?

I am prepared to die, said Surrey with a proud smile; the other questions, my father, I will answer to my God there above.

Do you confess that you were a wicked traitor? And do you beg the forgiveness of your noble and righteous, your exalted and good King for the blasphemous injury to his sacred Majesty?

Earl Surrey looked him steadily in the eye. Do you know what crime I am accused of?

The priest cast down his eyes and muttered a few unintelligible words.

With a haughty movement of the head, Henry Howard turned from the priest to the Lieutenant of the Tower.

Do you know my crime, my Lord? said he.

But the Lord Lieutenant also dropped his eyes, and remained silent.

Henry Howard smiled. Well now, I will tell you; I have as it becomes me, as the son of my father, borne the arms of our house on my shield and over the entrance to my palace, and it has been discovered that the King bears the same arms that we do. That is my high treason! I have said that the King is deceived in many of his servants, and often promotes his favorites to high honors which they do not deserve. That is my offence against his Majesty; and it is that for which I shall

lay my head upon the block.* But make yourselves easy; I shall myself add to my crimes one more, so that they may be grievous enough to make the conscience of the righteous and generous King quiet. I have given up my heart to a wretched and criminal love, and the Geraldine, whom I have sung in many a poem and have celebrated even before the King, was nothing but a miserable coquettish strumpet!

Jane Douglas gave a scream, and sunk upon the ground as if struck by lightning.

Do you repent of this sin, my son? asked the priest. Do you turn your heart away from this sinful love, in order to turn it to God?

I not only repent of this love, but I execrate it! and now, my father, let us go; for you see indeed my Lord is becoming impatient.—He bears in mind that the King will find no rest until the Howards also have gone to rest. Ah, King Henry! King Henry! Thou callest thyself the mighty King of the world, and yet thou tremblest before the arms of thy subject! My Lord, if you go to the King to-day, give him Henry Howard's greeting; and tell him, I wish his bed may be as easy to him, as the grave will be to me. Now come, my Lords. It is time.

With head proudly erect and calm step he turned to the door. But now Jane Douglas sprang from the ground; now she rushed to Henry Howard and clung to him with all the might of her passion and agony. I leave you not! cried she breathless and pale as death. You dare not repulse me, for you have sworn that we shall live and die together.

He hurled her from him in fierce wrath, and drew himself up before her, lofty and threatening.

I forbid you to follow me! cried he in a tone of command. She reeled back against the wall and looked at him, trembling and breathless.

He was still lord over her soul; she was still subject to him in love and obedience. She could not therefore summon up courage to defy his command.

She beheld as he left the room and passed down the corridor with his dreadful train; she heard their footsteps gradually die away; and then suddenly in the yard below sounded the hollow roll of the drum.

Jane Douglas fell on her knees to pray, but her lips trembled so much that she could find no words for her prayer.

The roll of the drum ceased in the court below, and only the death-bell still continued to wail and wail. She heard a voice speaking loud and powerful words

It was *his* voice; it was Henry Howard that was speaking. And now again the hollow roll of the drums which drowned his voice.

He dies! He dies, and I am not with him! cried she with a shriek; and she gathered herself up, and as if borne by a whirlwind she dashed out of the room, through the corridor, and down the stairs.

There she stood in the court. That dreadful black pile above there, in the midst of this square crowded with men—that was the scaffold.

* These two insignificant accusations were the only points that could be made out against the Earl of Surrey. Upon these charges, brought by his mother and sister, he was executed.—Tytler, page 492; Burnet, vol. 1. page 75; Lett. vol. 1. page 108.

Yonder above she beheld *him* prostrate on his knees. She beheld the axe in the headsman's hand; she saw him raise it for the fatal stroke.

She was a woman no longer, but a lioness! Not a drop of blood was in her cheeks. Her nostrils were expanded and her eyes darted lightning.

She drew out a dagger that she had concealed in her bosom, and made a path through the amazed, frighted, yielding crowd.

With one spring she had rushed up the steps of the scaffold. She now stood by him on the top of it—close by that kneeling figure.

There was a flash through the air. She heard a peculiar whiz—then a hollow blow. A red vapor like streak of blood spurted up, and covered Jane Douglas with its crimson flood.

I come, Henry, I come! cried she with a wild shout. I shall be with thee in death!

And again there was a flash through the air. It was the dagger that Jane Douglas plunged into her heart.

She had struck well. No sound—no groan burst from her lips. With a proud smile she sank by her lover's headless corpse, and with a last dying effort she said to the horrified headsman: Let me share his grave! Henry Howard, in life and in death I am with thee!

CHAPTER XII.

NEW INTRIGUES.

Henry Howard was dead; and now one would have thought the King might be satisfied and quiet, and that sleep would no longer flee from his eyelids, since Henry Howard, his great rival, had closed his eyes forever; since Henry Howard was no longer there, to steal away his crown, to fill the world with the glory of his deeds, to dim the genius of the King by his own fame as a poet.

But the King was still dissatisfied. Sleep still fled from his couch.

The cause of this was, that his work was only just half done. Henry Howard's father, the Duke of Norfolk, still lived. The cause of this was, that the King was always obliged to think of this powerful rival; and these thoughts chased sleep from his eyelids. His soul was sick of the Howards; therefore his body suffered such terrible pains.

If the Duke of Norfolk would close his eyes in death, then would the King also be able to close his again in refreshing sleep! But this Court of Peers—and only by such a Court could the Duke be judged—this Court of Peers was so slow and deliberate! It worked by far less rapidly, and

was not near so serviceable, as the Parliament which had so quickly condemned Henry Howard. Why must the old Howard bear a ducal title! Why was he not like his son, only an Earl, so that the obedient Parliament might condemn him!

That was the King's inextinguishable grief, his gnawing pain, which made him raving with fury and heated his blood, and thereby increased the pains of his body.

He raved and roared with impatience. Through the halls of his palace resounded his savage vituperation. It made every one tremble and quake, for no one was sure that it was not he that was to fall that day a victim to the King's fury. No one could know whether the King's ever increasing thirst for blood would not that day doom him.

With the most jealous strictness the King, from his sick couch, watched over his royal dignity; and the least fault against that, might arouse his wrath and blood-thirstiness. Woe to those who wanted to still maintain that the Pope was Head of the Church! Woe to those who ventured to call God the only Lord of the Church, and honored not the King as the Church's holy protector! The one, like the other, were traitors and sinners, and he had Protestants and Roman Catholics alike executed, however near they stood to his own person, and however closely he was otherwise bound to them.

Whoever, therefore, could avoid it, kept himself far from the dreaded person of the King; and whoever was constrained by duty to be near him, trembled for his life, and commended his soul to God.

There were only four persons who did not fear the King, and who seemed to be safe from his destroying wrath. There was the Queen who nursed him with devoted attention, and John Heywood who with untiring zeal sustained Catharine in her difficult task, and who still sometimes succeeded in winning a smile from the King. There were furthermore, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Earl Douglas.

Lady Jane Douglas was dead. The King had therefore forgiven her father, and again shown himself gracious and friendly to the deeply bowed Earl. Besides it was such an agreeable and refreshing feeling to the suffering King, to have some one about him who suffered yet more than he himself. It comforted him to know that there could be agonies yet more horrible than those pains of the body under which he languished. Earl Douglas suffered these agonies; and the King saw with a kind of delight, how his hair turned daily more grey, and his features became more relaxed and feeble. Douglas was younger than the King, and yet how old and grey his face was beside the King's well fed and blooming countenance!

Could the King have seen the bottom of his soul, he would have had less sympathy with Earl Douglas' sorrow.

He considered him only as a tender father mourning the death of his only child. He did not suspect that it was less the father, that Jane's painful death had smitten, than the ambitious man, the fanatical Roman Catholic, the enthusiastic disciple of Loyola, who with dismay saw all

his plans frustrated, and the moment drawing nigh, when he would be divested of that power and consideration which he enjoyed in the secret league of the disciples of Jesus.

With him, therefore, it was less the *daughter*, for whom he mourned, than *the King's seventh wife*. And that Catharine wore the crown, and not his daughter—not Jane Douglas—this it was, that he could never forgive the Queen.

He wanted to take vengeance on the Queen for Jane's death; he wanted to punish Catharine for his frustrated hopes, for his desires that she had trampled upon.

But Earl Douglas durst not himself venture to make another attempt to prejudice the King's mind against his consort. Henry had interdicted him from it under the penalty of his wrath. With words of threatening, he had warned him from such an attempt; and Earl Douglas very well knew that King Henry was inflexible in his determination, when the matter under consideration was the execution of a threatened punishment.

Yet what Douglas durst not venture, that Gardiner could venture. Gardiner—who, thanks to the capriciousness of the sick King, had for the few days past enjoyed again the royal favor so unreservedly, that the noble Archbishop Cranmer had received orders to leave the Court and retire to his Episcopal residence at Lambeth.

Catharine had seen him depart with anxious forebodings; for Cranmer had ever been her friend and support. His mild and serene countenance had ever been to her like a star of peace in the midst of this tempest tossed and passion-lashed Court life; and his gentle and noble words had always fallen like a soothing balm on her poor trembling heart.

She felt that with his departure she lost her noblest support, her strengthening aid, and that she was now surrounded only by enemies and opponents. True, she still had John Heywood, the faithful friend, the indefatigable servant; but since Gardiner had exercised his sinister influence over the King's mind, John Heywood durst scarcely risk himself in Henry's presence. True, she had also Thomas Seymour, her lover; but she knew and felt that she was everywhere surrounded by spies and eavesdroppers, and that now it required nothing more than an interview with Thomas Seymour—a few tender words—perchance even only a look full of mutual understanding and love, in order to send him and her to the scaffold.

She trembled not for herself, but for her lover. That made her cautious and thoughtful. That gave her courage never to show Thomas Seymour other than a cold, serious face; never to meet him otherwise than in the circle of her Court; never to smile on him; never to give him her hand.

She was however certain of her future. She knew that a day would come, on which the King's death would deliver her from her burdensome grandeur and her painful royal crown; when she should be free—free, to give her hand to the man whom alone on earth she loved, and to become his wife.

She waited for that day, as the prisoner does for the hour of his release; but like him, she knew that a premature attempt to escape from her dungeon, would bring her only ruin and death, and not freedom.

She must be patient and wait. She must give up all personal intercourse with her lover; and even his letters, John Heywood could bring her but very seldom, and only with the greatest caution. How often already had not John Heywood conjured her to give up this correspondence also; how often had he not with tears in his eyes besought her to renounce this love, which might one day be her ruin and her death! Catharine laughed at his gloomy forebodings, and opposed to his dark prophecies a bravery reliant on the future, the joyous courage of her love.

She would not die, for happiness and love were awaiting her; she would not renounce happiness and love. for the sake of which she could endure this life in other respects—this life of peril, of resignation, of enmity and of hatred.

But she wanted to live in order to be happy hereafter. This thought made her brave and resolute; it gave her courage to defy her enemies with serene brow and smiling lip; it enabled her to sit with bright eye and rosy cheeks at the side of her dreaded and severe husband, and, with cheerful wit and inexhaustible good humor, jest away the frown from his brow, and vexation from his soul.

But just because she could do this, she was a dangerous antagonist to Douglas and Gardiner. Just on that account, it was to be their highest effort to destroy this beautiful young woman, who durst defy them and weaken their influence with the King. If they could but succeed in rendering the King's mind more and more gloomy; if they could but completely fill him again with fanatical religious zeal; then, and then only, could they hope to attain their end; which end was this: to bring back the King as a contrite, penitent and humble son of the only saving mother Church, and to make him again, from a proud, vain and imperious prince, an obedient and submissive son of the Pope.

The King was to renounce this vain and blasphemous arrogance of wishing to be himself Head of his Church. He was to turn away from the spirit of novelty and heresy, and again become a faithful and devout Catholic.

But in order that they might attain this end, Catharine must be removed from him; he must no longer behold her rosy and beautiful face, and no longer allow himself to be diverted by her sensible discourse and her keen wit.

We shall not be able to overthrow the Queen, said Earl Douglas to Gardiner, as the two stood in the King's ante-room, and as Catharine's cheerful chit-chat and the King's merry laugh came pealing to them from the adjoining room. No. no, Gardiner, she is too powerful and too crafty. The King loves her very much; and she is such an agreeable and refreshing recreation to him.

Just on that account we must withdraw her from him, said Gardiner

with a dark frown. He must turn away his heart from this earthly love; and after we shall have mortified this love in him, this savage and arrogant man will return to us and to God, contrite and humble.

But we shall not be able to mortify it, friend. It is so ardent and selfish a love.

So much the greater will be the triumph, if our holy admonitions are successful in touching his heart, Douglas. It is true he will suffer very much, if he is obliged to give up this woman. But he needs precisely this suffering in order to become contrite and penitent. His mind must first be entirely darkened, so that we can illuminate it with the light of faith. He must first be rendered perfectly isolated and comfortless in order to bring him back to the holy communion of the Church, and to find him again accessible to the consolations of that faith which alone can save.

Ah, sighed Douglas, I fear that this will be a useless struggle. The King is so vain of his self-constituted high-priesthood!

But he is such a weak man, and such a great sinner, said Gardiner with a cold smile. He trembles so much at death and God's judgment, and our holy mother the Church can give him absolution, and by her holy sacraments render death easy to him. He is a wicked sinner and has stings of conscience. This it is that will bring him back again to the bosom of the Catholic Church.

But when will that come to pass? The King is sick, and any day may put an end to his life. Woe to us, if he die before he has given the power into our hands and nominated us his executors. Woe to us, if the Queen is appointed Regent, and the King selects the Seymours as her ministers. Oh, my wise and pious father, the work that you wish to do, must be done soon, or it must remain forever unaccomplished.

It shall be done this very day, said Gardiner solemnly; and bending down closer to the Earl's ear, he continued: we have lulled the Queen into assurance and self-confidence, and by this means she shall be ruined this very day. She relies so strongly on her power over the King's disposition, that she often summons up courage even to contradict him, and to set her own will in opposition to his. That shall be her ruin this very day! For mark well, Earl: the King is now again like a tiger that has been long fasting. He thirsts for blood! The Queen has an aversion to human blood, and she is horrified when she hears of executions. So we must manage that these opposing inclinations may come into contact, and contend with each other.

Oh, I understand now, whispered Douglas; and I bow in reverence before the wisdom of your Highness. You will let them both contend with their own weapons.

I will point out a welcome prey to his appetite for blood, and give her silly compassion an opportunity to contend with the King for his prey. Do you not think, Earl, that this will be an amusing spectacle, and one refreshing to the heart, to see how the tiger and dove struggle with each other? And I tell you the tiger thirsts so much for blood! Blood is

the only balm that he applies to his aching limbs, and by which alone he imagines that he can restore peace and courage to his tortured conscience and his dread of death. Ah, ha, we have told him that with each new execution of a heretic, one of his great sins would be blotted out, and that the blood of the Calvanists serves to wash out of his account-book some of his evil deeds. He would be so glad to be able to appear pure and guiltless before the tribunal of his God! Therefore he needs very much heretical blood. But hark—the hour strikes which summons me to the royal chamber. There has been enough of the Queen's laughing and chit-chat. We will now endeavor to banish the smile forever from her face. She is a heretic; and it is a pious work, well pleasing to God, if we plunge her headlong into ruin!

May God be with your Highness, and assist you by his grace, that you may accomplish this sublime work!

God will be with us, my son, since for him it is that we labor and harrass ourselves. To his honor and praise we bring these misbelieving heretics to the stake, and make the air re-echo with the agonizing shrieks of those who are racked and tortured. That is music well pleasing to God; and the angels in heaven will triumph and be glad when the heretical and infidel Queen Catharine also has to strike up this music of the damned. Now I go to the holy labor of love and godly wrath. Pray for me, my son, that I may succeed. Remain here in the ante-room, and await my call; perhaps we shall need you. Pray for us, and with us. Ah, we still owe this heretical Queen a grudge for Anne Askew. To day we will pay her. Then she accused us, to-day we will accuse her, and God and his host of saints and angels are with us.

And the pious and godly priest crossed himself, and with head humbly bowed and a soft smile about his thin, bloodless lips, strode through the hall in order to betake himself to the King's chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE KING AND THE PRIEST.

God bless and preserve your Majesty, said Gardiner, as he entered, to the King, who just then was sitting with the Queen at the chess-board. With frowning brow and compressed lips he looked over the game, which stood unfavorable for him, and threatened him with a speedy checkmate

It was not wise in the Queen not to let the King win; for his superstitious and jealous temper looked upon such a won game of chess as

withal an assault on his own person. And he, who ventured to conquer him at chess, was always to Henry a sort of traitor, that threatened his kingdom, and was rash enough to attempt to seize the crown.

The Queen very well knew that, but—Gardiner was right—she was too self-confident. She trusted a little to her power over the King; she imagined he would make an exception in her favor. And it was so dull to be obliged ever to be the losing and conquered party at this game; to permit the King always to appear as the triumphant victor, and to bestow on his game praise which he did not deserve. Catharine wanted to allow herself for once the triumph of having beaten her husband. She fought him man to man; she irritated him by her ever renewed attacks; she embittered him by the ever approaching danger.

The King, who at the beginning had been cheerful, and laughed when Catharine took one of his pieces—the King now no longer laughed. It was no more a game. It was a serious struggle; and the King contended with his consort for the victory with impassioned eagerness.

Catharine did not even see the clouds which were gathering on the King's brow. Her looks were directed only to the chess-board; and, breathless with expectation and glowing with eagerness, she considered the move she was about to make.

But Gardiner was very well aware of the King's secret anger; and he comprehended that the situation was favorable for him.

With soft, sneaking step he approached the King and, standing behind him, looked over the game.

You are checkmated in four moves, my husband! said the Queen with a cheerful laugh, as she made her move.

A still darker frown gathered on the King's brow, and his lips were violently compressed.

It is true, your Majesty, said Gardiner. You will soon have to succumb. Danger threatens you from the queen.

Henry gave a start, and turned his face to Gardiner with an expression of inquiry. In his exasperated mood against the Queen, the crafty priest's ambiguous remark struck him with double keenness.

Gardiner was a very skillful hunter; the very first arrow that he shot, had hit.—But Catharine, too, had heard it whiz. Gardiner's slow, ambiguous words had startled her from her artless security; and as she now looked into the King's glowing, excited face, she comprehended her want of prudence.

But it was too late to remedy it. The King's checkmate was unavoidable; and Henry himself had already noticed it.

It is all right! said the King impetuously. You have won, Catharine; and by the Holy Mother of God, you can boast of the rare good fortune of having vanquished Henry of England.

I will not boast of it, my noble husband! said she with a smile. You have played with me as the lion does with the puppy, which he does not crush only because he has compassion on him, and he pities the poor

little creature. Lion, I thank you. You have been magnanimous to-day. You have let me win.

The King's face brightened a little. Gardiner saw it. He must prevent Catharine from following up her advantage farther.

Magnanimity is an exalted, but a very dangerous virtue, said he gravely; and Kings above all things dare not exercise it; for magnanimity pardons crimes committed, and Kings are not here to pardon, but to punish.

Oh, no indeed, said Catharine; to be able to be magnanimous is the noblest prerogative of Kings; and since they are God's representatives on earth, they too must exercise pity and mercy, like God himself.

The King's brow again grew dark, and his sullen looks stared at the chess board.

Gardiner shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply. He drew a roll of papers out of his gown and handed it to the King.

Sire, said he, I hope you do not share the Queen's views. Else it would be bad for the quiet and peace of the country. Mankind cannot be governed by mercy, but only through fear. Your Majesty holds the sword in his hands. If you hesitate to let it fall on evil doers, they will soon wrest it from your hands, and you will be powerless!

Those are very cruel words, your Highness! exclaimed Catharine, who allowed herself to be carried away by her magnanimous heart, and suspected that Gardiner had come to move the King to some harsh and bloody decision.

She wanted to anticipate his design; she wanted to move the King to mildness. But the moment was unpropitious for her.

The King, whom she had just before irritated by her victory over him, felt his vexation heightened by the opposition which she offered to the Bishop; for this opposition was at the same time directed against himself. The King was not at all inclined to exercise mercy; it was, therefore, a very wicked notion of the Queen's, to praise mercy as the highest privilege of princes.

With a silent nod of the head, he took the papers from Gardiner's hands, and opened them.

Ah, said he, running over the pages, your Highness is right; men do not deserve to be treated with mercy, for they are always ready to abuse it. Because we have for a few weeks lighted no fagot piles and erected no scaffolds, they imagine that we are asleep; and they begin their treasonable and mischeivous doings with redoubled violence, and raise their sinful fists against us, in order to mock us. I see here an accusation against one who has presumed to say that there is no king by the grace of God; and that the King is a miserable and sinful mortal just as well as the lowest beggar. Well, we will concede this man his point—we will not be to him a King by the grace of God, but a King by the wrath of God! We will show him that we are not yet quite like the lowest beggar, for we still possess at least wood enough to build a pile of fagots for him.

And as the King thus spoke, he broke out into a loud laugh, in which Gardiner heartily chimed.

Here I behold the indictment of two others who deny the King's supremacy, continued Henry, still turning over the leaves of the papers. They revile me as a blasphemer, because I dare call myself God's representative—the visible Head of His Holy Church; they say that God alone is Lord of His Church, and that Luther and Calvin are more exalted representatives of God than the King himself. Verily we must hold our royalty and our God-granted dignity very cheap, if we should not punish these transgressors, who blasphemes in our sacred person God himself!

He continued turning over the leaves. Suddenly a deep flush of anger suffused his countenance, and a fierce curse burst from his lips.

He threw the paper on the table, and struck it with his clenched fist. Are all the devils let loose then? yelled he in wrath. Does sedition blaze so wildly in my land, that we have no longer the power to subdue it. Here a fanatical heretic on the public street has warned the people not to read that holy book which I myself, like a well intentioned and provident father and guardian, wrote for my people, and gave it them that they might be edified and exalted thereby. And this book that felon has shown to the people, and said to them: "You call that the King's book; and you are right; for it is a wicked book, a work of hell, and the Devil is the King's sponsor!" Ah, I see well we must again show our earnest and angry face to this miserable, traitorous rabble, that it may again have faith in the King. It is a wretched, disgusting and contemptible mob—this people! They are obedient and humble only when they tremble and feel the lash. Only when they are trampled in the dust, do they acknowledge that we are their master; and when we have them racked and burnt, they have respect for our excellency. We must, however, brand royalty on their bodies so that they may be sensible of it as a reality. And by the eternal God, we will do that! Give me the pen here that I may sign and ratify these warrants. But dip the pen well, your Highness, for there are eight warrants, and I must write my name eight times. Ah, ah, it is a hard and fatiguing occupation to be a king, and no day passes without trouble and toil!

The Lord our God will bless this toil to you! said Gardiner solemnly, as he handed the King the pen.

Henry was preparing to write, as Catharine laid her hand on his, and checked him.

Do not sign them, my husband, said she in a voice of entreaty. Oh, by all that is sacred to you, I conjure you not to let yourself be carried away by your momentary vexation; let not the injured man be mightier in you than the righteous King. Let the sun set and rise on your wrath; and then, when you are perfectly calm, perfectly composed—then pronounce judgment on these accused. For, consider it well, my husband, these are eight death-warrants, that you are here about to sign; and with these

few strokes of the pen, you will tear eight human beings from life, from family and from the world; you will take from the mother, her son; from the wife, her husband; from the infant children, their father. Consider it, Henry; it is so weighty a responsibility that God has placed in your hand, and it is presumptuous not to meet it in holy earnestness and undisturbed tranquility of mind.

Now, by the Holy Mother! cried the King, striking vehemently upon the table, I believe forsooth, you dare excuse traitors and blasphemers of their King! You have not heard then of what they are accused?

I have heard it, said Catharine more and more warmly; I have heard, and I say, nevertheless, sign not those death-warrants, my husband. It is true these poor creatures have grievously erred, but they erred as human beings. Then let your punishment also be human. It is not wise, oh King, to want to avenge so bitterly a trifling injury to your Majesty. A king must be exalted above reviling and calumny. Like the sun, he must shine upon the just and the unjust, no one of whom is so mighty that he can cloud his splendor and dim his glory. Punish evildoers and criminals, but be noble and magnanimous towards those who have injured your person.

The King is no person that can be injured! said Gardiner. The King is a sublime idea, a mighty, world-embracing thought. Whoever injures the King, has not injured a person, but divinely instituted royalty —the universal thought, that holds together the whole world!

Whoever injures the King has injured God! yelled the King; and whoever seizes our crown and reviles us, shall have his hand struck off, and his tongue torn out, as is done to atheists and patricides!

Well, strike off their hand then, mutilate them; but do not kill them! cried Catharine passionately. Ascertain at least whether their crime is so grievous, as they want to make you believe, my husband. Oh, it is so easy now to be accused as a traitor and atheist. All that is needed for it, is an inconsiderate word, a doubt, not as to God, but as to his priests and this Church, which you, my King, have established; and of which the lofty and peculiar structure is to many so new and unusual, that they ask themselves in doubt, whether that is a Church of God or a palace of the King, and that they lose themselves in its labyrinthine passages and wander about without being able to find the exit.

Had they faith, said Gardiner, solemnly, they would not lose their way; and were God with them, the entrance would not be closed to them.

Oh, I well know that *you* are always inexorable! cried Catharine angrily. But it is not to you either, that I intercede for mercy, but to the King; and I tell you, Sir Bishop, it would be better for you, and more worthy of a priest of Christian love, if you united your prayers with mine, instead of wanting to dispose the King's noble heart to severity. You are a priest; and you have learned in your own life, that there are many paths that lead to God, and that we, one and all, doubt and are perplexed which of them is right.

How? screamed the King, as he rose from his seat and gazed at Catharine with angry looks. You mean, then, that the heretics also may find themselves on a path that leads to God?

I mean, cried she passionately, that Jesus Christ, too, was called an atheist, and executed. I mean that Stephen was stoned by Paul, and that, nevertheless, both are now honored as saints and prayed to as such. I mean, that Socrates was not damned because he lived before Christ, and so could not be acquainted with his religion; and that Horace and Julius Cæsar, Phidias and Plato must yet be called great and noble spirits, even though they were heathen. Yes, my lord and husband, I mean that it behooves us well to exercise gentleness in matters of religion, and that faith is not to be obtruded on men by main force as a burden, but is to be bestowed upon them as a benefit through their own conviction.

So you do not hold these eight accused to be criminals worthy of death! asked Henry with studied calmness, and a composure maintained with difficulty.

No, my husband! I hold that they are poor, erring mortals, who seek the right path, and would willingly travel it; and who, therefore, ask in doubt all along: Is this the right way?

It is enough! said the King, as he beckoned Gardiner to him, and leaning on his arm, took a few steps across the room. We will speak no more of these matters. They are too grave for us to wish to decide them in the presence of our gay young Queen. The heart of woman is always inclined to gentleness and forgiveness. You should have borne that in mind, Gardiner, and not have spoken of these matters in the Queen's presence.

Sire, it was, however, the hour that you appointed for consultation on these matters.

Was it the hour! exclaimed the King quickly. Well, then we did wrong to devote it to anything else than grave employments; and you will pardon me, Queen, if I beg you to leave me alone with the Bishop. Affairs of State must not be postponed.

He presented Catharine his hand and with difficulty, and yet with a smiling countenance, conducted her to the door. As she stopped, and, looking him in the eye with an expression inquiring and smiling, opened her lips to speak to him, he made an impatient gesture with his hand, and a dark frown gathered on his brow.

It is late, said he hastily, and we have business of State.

Catharine did not venture to speak; she bowed in silence and left the room. The King watched her with sullen brow and angry looks. Then he turned round to Gardiner.

Now? asked he, what do you think of the Queen?

I think, said Gardiner so slowly and so deliberately that each word had time to penetrate the King's sensitive heart like the prick of a needle, I think that she does not deem them criminals, that call the holy book, which you have written, a work of hell; and that she has a great

deal of sympathy for those heretics, who will not acknowledge your supremacy.

By the Holy Mother, I believe she herself would speak thus, and avow herself among my enemies, if she were not my wife! cried the King, in whose heart rage began already to seethe like lava in a volcano.

She does it already, although she is your wife, Sire! She imagines, her exalted position renders her unamenable, and protects her from your righteous wrath; therefore she does what no one else dares do, and speaks what in the mouth of any other would be the blackest treason.

What does she? and what says she? cried the King. Do not hesitate to tell me, your Highness. It behooves me well to know what my wife does and says.

Sire, she is not merely the secret patroness of heretics and reformers, but she is also a professor of their faith. She listens to their false doctrine with eager mind, and receives the cursed priests of this sect into her apartments, in order to hear their fanatical discourse and hellish inspiration. He speaks of these heretics as true believers and Christians; and denominates Luther the light that God has sent into the world to illuminate the gloom and falsehood of the Church with the splendor of truth and love—that Luther, Sire, who dared write you such shameful and insulting letters, and ridiculed in such a brutal manner your royalty and your wisdom.

She is a heretic; and when you say that, you say everything! screamed the King. The volcano was ripe for an eruption, and the seething lava must at last have an outlet.

Yes, she is a heretic! repeated the King; and yet we have sworn to exterminate these atheists from our land.

She very well knows that she is secure from your wrath, said Gardiner with a shrug of the shoulders. She relies on the fact that she is the Queen, and that in the heart of her exalted husband love is mightier than the faith.

Nobody shall suppose that he is secure from my wrath, and no one shall rely on the security afforded him by my love. She is a proud, arrogant and audacious woman! cried the King, whose looks were just then fixed again on the chess-board, and whose spite was heightened by the remembrance of the lost game. She ventures to brave us, and to have a will other than ours. By the Holy Mother, we will endeavor to break her stubbornness, and bend her proud neck beneath our will. Yes, I will show the world that Henry of England is still the Immoveable and Incorruptible. I will give the heretics an evidence that I am in reality the Defender and Protector of the Faith and of religion in my land, and that nobody stands too high to be struck by my wrath, and to feel the sword of justice on his neck. She is a heretic; and we have sworn to destroy heretics with fire and sword. We shall keep our oath.

And God will bless you with his blessing. He will surround your head with a halo of fame; and the Church will praise you as her most glorious pastor, her exalted head.

Be it so! said the King, as with youthful alacrity he strode across the room; and, stepping to his writing table, with a vigorous and fleet hand he wrote down a few lines.

Gardiner stood in the middle of the room with his hands folded; and his lips murmured in an undertone a prayer, while his large flashing eyes were fastened on the King with a curious and penetrating expression.

Here, your Highness, the King then said, take this paper—take it and order everything necessary It is an arrest-warrant; and before the night draws on, the Queen shall be in the Tower.

Verily, the Lord is mighty in you! cried Gardiner as he took the paper; the heavenly hosts sing their hallelujah and look down with rapture on the hero who subdues his own heart to serve God and the Church.

Take it and speed you! said the King hastily. In a few hours everything must be done. Give Earl Douglas the paper, and bid him go with it to the Lord Lieutenant of the Tower, so that he himself may repair hither with the yeomen of the guard. For this woman is yet a Queen, and even in the criminal, I will still recognize the Queen. The Lord-Lieutenant himself must conduct her to the Tower. Hasten then, say I! But hark you, keep all this a secret, and let nobody know anything of it till the decisive moment arrives. Otherwise her friends might take a notion to implore my mercy for this sinner; and I abhor this whining and crying. Silence then, for I am tired and need rest and sleep. I have, as you say, just done a work well pleasing to God; perhaps he may send me, as a reward for it, invigorating and strengthening sleep, which I have now so long desired in vain.

And the King threw back the curtains of his couch, and, supported by Gardiner, laid himself on the downy cushion.

Gardiner drew the curtains again, and shoved the fatal paper into his pocket. Even in his hands it did not seem to him secure enough. What? Might not some curious eye fasten on it, and divine its contents? Might not some impertinent and shameless friend of the Queen snatch this paper from him, and carry it to her and give her warning? No, no, it was not secure enough in his hands. He must hide it in the pocket of his gown. There, no one could find it, no one discover it.

So there he hid it. In the gown with its large folds it was safe; and after he had thus concealed the precious paper, he left the room with rapid strides, in order to acquaint Earl Douglas with the glorious result of his pains.

Not a single time did he look back. Had he done so, he would have sprung back into that room as a tiger pounces on his prey. He would have plunged, as the hawk stoops at the dove, at that piece of white paper, that lay there on the floor, exactly on the spot where Gardiner was before standing when he shoved into his pocket the arrest-warrant written by the King.

Ah, even the gown of a priest is not always close enough to conceal a dangerous secret; and even the pocket of a bishop may sometimes have holes in it.

Gardiner went away with the proud consciousness of having the order of arrest in his pocket; and that fatal paper lay on the floor in the middle of the King's chamber.

Who will come to pick it up? Who will become the sharer of this dangerous secret? To whom will this mute paper proclaim the shocking news that the Queen has fallen into disgrace, and is this very day to be dragged to the Tower as a prisoner?

All is still and lonely in the King's apartment. Nothing is stirring, not even the heavy damask curtains of the royal couch.

The King sleeps. Even vexation and anger are a good lullaby; they have so agitated and prostrated the King, that he has actually fallen asleep from weariness.

Ah, the King should have been thankful to his wife, for his vexation at the lost game of chess, and his wrath at Catharine's heretical sentiments. These had fatigued him; these had lulled him to sleep.

The warrant of arrest still lay on the floor. Now quite softly, quite cautiously the door opens. Who is it, that dares venture to enter the King's room unsummoned and unannounced?

There are only three persons who dare venture that: the Queen, Princess Elizabeth and John Heywood the fool. Which of the three is it?

It is Princess Elizabeth, who comes to salute her royal father. Every forenoon at this hour she had found the King in his room. Where was he then to-day?—As she looked around the room with an enquiring and surprised air, her eye fell on that paper which lay there on the floor. She picked it up, and examined it with childish curiosity. What could this paper contain? Surely it was no secret—else, it would not lie here on the floor.

She opened it and read. Her fine countenance expressed horror and amazement; a low exclamation escaped her lips. But Elizabeth had a strong and resolute soul; and the unexpected and the surprising did not dull her clear vision, nor cloud her sharp wit. The Queen was in danger. The Queen was to be imprisoned. *That*, this dreadful paper shrieked in her ear; but she durst not allow herself to be stunned by it. She must act; she must warn the Queen.

She hid the paper in her bosom, and light as a zephyr she floated away again out of the chamber.

With flashing eyes and cheeks reddened by her rapid race, Elizabeth entered the Queen's chamber; with passionate vehemence she clasped her in her arms and tenderly kissed her.

Catharine, my Queen and my mother, said she, we have sworn to stand by and protect each other when danger threatens us. Fate is gracious to me, for it has given into my hand the means of making good my oath this very day. Take that paper and read! It is an order for your imprisonment, made out by the King himself. When you have read it, then let us consider what is to be done, and how we can avert the danger from you.

An order of imprisonment! said Catharine with a shudder as she read it. An order of imprisonment, that is to say, a death-warrant! For when once the threshold of that frightful Tower is crossed, it denotes that it is never to be left again; and if a Queen is arrested and accused, then is she also already condemned. Oh my God, Princess, do you comprehend that—to have to die while life still throbs so fresh and warm in our veins? To be obliged to go to death, while the future still allures us with a thousand hopes, a thousand wishes? My God, to have to descend into the desolate prison, and into the gloomy grave, while the world greets us with alluring voices, and springtide has scarcely awoke in our heart?

Streams of tears burst from her eyes, and she hid her face in her trembling hands.

Weep not, Queen, whispered Elizabeth, herself trembling and pale as death. Weep not; but consider what is to be done. Each minute, and the danger increases; each minute brings the evil nearer to us.

You are right, said Catharine, as she again raised her head, and shook the tears from her eyes. Yes, you are right; it is not time to weep and wail. Death is creeping upon me; but I—I will not die. I live still; and so long as there is a breath in me I will fight against death. God will assist me; God will help me to overcome this danger also, as I have already done so many others.

But what will you do? where can you begin? You know not the accusation. You know not who accuses you, nor with what you are charged.

Yet I suspect it! said the Queen musingly. When I now recall to mind the King's angry countenance, and the malicious smile of that malignant priest, I believe I know the accusation. Yes—everything is now clear to me. Ah, it is the heretic that they would sentence to death. Well now, my Lord Bishop, I still live; and we will see which of us two will gain the victory!

With proud step and glowing cheeks, she hurried to the door. Elizabeth held her back. Whither are you going? cried she in astonishment.

To the King! said she with a proud smile. He has heard the Bishop; now he shall hear me also. The King's disposition is fickle and easily changed. We will now see which cunning is the stronger—the cunning of the priest, or the cunning of the woman. Elizabeth, pray for me. I go to the King; and you will either see me free and happy, or never again.

She imprinted a passionate kiss on Elizabeth's lips and hurriedly left the chamber.

CHAPTER XIV

CHESS-PLAY.

It was many days since the King had been as well as he was to-day. For a long time he had not enjoyed such refreshing sleep as on the day when he signed the warrant for the Queen's imprisonment. But he thought nothing at all about it. Sleep seemed to have obliterated all recollection of it from his memory. Like an anecdote which you listen to, and smile at for the moment, but soon forget, so had the whole occurrence vanished again from him. It was an anecdote of the moment —a transient interlude—nothing farther.

The King had slept well, and he had no care for anything else. He stretched himself, and lay lounging on his couch, thinking with rapture how fine it would be, if he could enjoy such sweet and refreshing repose every day, and if no bad dreams and no fear would frighten away sleep from his eyes. He felt very serene and very good-humored; and had any one now come to beg a favor of the King, he would have granted it in the first joy after such invigorating sleep. But he was alone; no one was with him; he must repress his gracious desires. But no.—Was it not as though something were stirring and breathing behind the curtains?

The King threw back the curtains, and a soft smile flitted over his features; for before his bed sat the Queen. There she sat with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, and greeted him with a roguish smile.

Ah, Kate, it is you! cried the King. Well, now I understand how it happened that I have had such a sound and refreshing sleep! You stood by as my good angel, and scared the pains and bad dreams away from my couch.

And as he said this, he reached out his hand and tenderly stroked her velvet cheek. He did not at all recollect that he had already, as it were, devoted that charming head to the scaffold, and that in a few hours more these bright eyes were to behold naught but the night of the dungeon. Sleep, as we have said, had lulled to sleep also the recollection of this; and the evil thoughts had not yet awoke again in him. To sign an order of arrest or a death-warrant was with the King such a usual and every-day matter, that it constituted no epoch in his life, and neither burdened him with troubles of conscience nor made his heart shudder and tremble.

But Catharine thought of it, and as the King's hand stroked her cheek, it was as though death was just then touching her, never again to release her. However, she overcame this momentary horror, and had the courage to preserve her serene and innocent air,

You call me your good angel, my husband, said she with a smile; but yet I am nothing more than your little Puck, who bustles about you, and now and then makes you laugh with his drolleries.

And a dear little Puck you are, Katie, cried the King, who always gazed upon his wife's rosy and fresh countenance with real satisfaction.

Then I will prove myself this very day your Puck, and allow you no more repose on your couch, said she, as she made a mock effort to raise him up. Do you know, my husband, why I came here? A butterfly has tapped at my window. Only think now, a butterfly in winter! That betokens, that this time winter is spring; and the clerk of the weather above there has confounded January with March. The butterfly has invited us, King; and only see! the sun is winking into the window to us, and says we have but to come out, as he has already dried the walks in the garden below, and called forth a little grass on the plat. And your rolling-chair stands all ready, my lord and husband, and your Puck, as you see, has already put on her furs, and clad herself in armor against the winter, which, however, is not there!

Well then, help me, my dearest Puck, so that I can arise, and obey the command of the butterfly and the sun and my lovely wife, cried the King, as he put his arm around Catharine's neck, and slowly raised himself from the couch.

She busied herself about him with officious haste; she put her arm tenderly on his shoulder and supported him; and properly arranged for him the gold chain, which had slipped out of place on his doublet, and playfully plaited the lace ruff which was about his neck.

Is it your order, my husband, that your servants come?—The Master of Ceremonies, who, without doubt, awaits your beck in the anteroom—the Lord Bishop—who awhile ago made such a black looking face at me? But how? my husband, your face, too, is now in an eclipse? How? Has your Puck perchance said something to put you out of tune?

No, indeed! said the King gloomily; but he avoided meeting her smiling glance and looking in her charming, rosy face.

The evil thoughts had again awoke in him; and now he remembered the warrant of arrest that he had given Gardiner. He remembered it; and he regretted it. For she was so fair and lovely—his young Queen; she understood so well by her jests to smooth away care from his brow and affright vexation from his soul. She was such an agreeable and sprightly pastime, such a refreshing means of driving away the ennui.

Not for her sake did he regret what he had done, but only on his own account. From selfishness alone, he repented having issued that order for the Queen's imprisonment. Catharine observed him. Her glance, sharpened by inward fear, read his thoughts on his brow, and understood the sigh which involuntarily arose from his breast. She again seized courage; she might succeed in turning away by a smile the sword that hung over her head.

Come, my lord and husband, said she cheerfully, the sun beckons to

us, and the trees shake their heads indignantly because we are not yet there.

Yes, come, Kate, said the King rousing himself with an effort from his brown study; come, we will go down into God's free air. Perhaps He is nearer to us there, and may illuminate us with good thoughts and wholesome resolutions. Come, Kate.

The Queen gave him her arm, and, supported on it, the King advanced a few steps. But suddenly Catharine stood still; and as the King fastened on her his inquiring look, she blushed and cast down her eyes.

Well? asked the King. Why do you linger?

Sire, I was considering your words; and what you say about the sun and wholesome resolutions, has touched my heart and startled my conscience. My husband, you are right; God is there without, and I dare not venture to behold the sun, which is God's eye, before I have made my confession and received absolution. Sire, I am a great sinner, and my conscience gives me no rest. Will you be my confessor, and listen to me?

The King sighed. Ah, thought he, she is hurrying to destruction, and by her own confession of guilt she will make it impossible for me to hold her guiltless!

Speak! said he aloud,

First, said she with downcast eyes—first, I must confess to you that I have tod'y deceived you, my lord and King. Vanity and sinful pride enticed me to this; and childish anger made me consummate what vanity whispered to me. But I repent, my King; I repent from the bottom of my soul, and I swear to you, my husband—yes, I swear to you by all that is sacred to me, that it is the first and only time that I have deceived you. And never will I venture to do it again, for it is a dismal and awful feeling to stand before you with a guilty conscience.

And in what have you deceived us, Kate? asked the King; and his voice trembled.

Catharine drew from her dress a small roll of paper and, humbly bowing, handed it to the King. Take and see for yourself, my husband, said she.

With hurried hand the King opened the paper, and then looked in utter astonishment, now at its contents, now at the blushing face of the Queen.

What? said he. You give me a pawn from the chess-board? What does that mean?

That means, said she in a tone of utter contrition—that means, that I stole it from you, and thereby cheated you out of your victory. Oh, pardon me, my husband, but I could no longer endure to always lose, and I was afraid you would no more allow me the pleasure of playing with you, when you perceived what a weak and contemptible antagonist I am. And behold, this little pawn was my enemy. It stood near my queen and threatened her with check while it discovered check to my

king from your bishop. You were just going to make this move, which was ruin to me, when Bishop Gardiner entered. You turned away your eyes and saluted him. You were not looking on the game—Oh, my lord and husband, the temptation was too alluring and seductive; and I yielded to it. Softly I took the pawn from the board, and slipped it into my pocket. When you looked again at the game, you seemed surprised at first; but your magnanimous and lofty spirit had no suspicion of my base act; so you innocently played on; and so I won the game of chess. On, my King, will you pardon me, and not be angry with me.

The King broke out into a loud laugh and looked with an expression of tenderness at Catharine, who stood before him with downcast eyes, abashed and blushing. This sight only redoubled his merriment and made him again and again roar out anew with laughter.

And that is all your crime, Kate? asked he at length drying his eyes. You have stolen a pawn from me—this is your first and only deception?

Is it not indeed great enough, Sire? Did I not purloin it because I was so highminded as to want to win a game of chess from you? Is not the whole Court even now acquainted with my splendid luck? And does it not know that I have been the victor to-day, whilst yet I was not entitled to be so—whilst I deceived you so shamefully?

Now verily, said the King solemnly, happy are the men, who are not worse deceived by their wives than you have deceived me to-day; and happy are the women, whose confessions are so pure and innocent as yours have been to-day! Do but lift up your eyes again, my Katie, that sin is forgiven you; and by God and by your King it shall be accounted to you as a virtue.

He laid his hand on her head, as if in blessing, and gazed at her long and silently. Then he said laughingly: According to this then, my Kate, I should have been the victor to day, and not have lost that game of chess.

No, said she dolefully, I must have lost it, if I had not stolen the pawn.

Again the King laughed. Catharine said earnestly: Do but believe me, my husband, Bishop Gardiner alone is the cause of my fall. Because he was by, I did not want to lose. My pride revolted, to think that this haughty and arrogant priest was to be witness of my defeat. In mind, I already saw the cold and contemptuous smile with which he would look down on me, the vanquished; and my heart rose in rebellion at the thought of being humbled before him. And now I have arrived at the second part of my fault which I want to confess to you to-day. Sire, I must acknowledge another great fault to you. I have grievously offended against you to-day, in that I contradicted you, and withstood your wise and pious words. Ah, my husband, it was not done to spite you, but only to vex and annoy the haughty priest. For I must confess to you, my King, I hate this Bishop of Winchester—aye, yet more—I have a dread of him; for my foreboding heart tells me, that he is my enemy, that he is watching each of my looks, each of my words,

so that he can make from them a noose to strangle me. He is the evil destiny, that creeps up behind me and would one day certainly destroy me, if your beneficent hand and your almighty arm did not protect me. Oh, when I behold him, my husband, I would always gladly fly to your heart, and say to you: Protect me, my King, and have compassion on me. Have faith in me and love me; for if you do not, I am lost! The evil fiend is there to destroy me.

And as she thus spoke, she clung affectionately to the King's side and leaning her head on his breast, looked up to him with a look of tender entreaty, and touching devotion.

The King bent down and kissed her brow. Oh, *sancta simplicitas*, softly murmured he—she knows not how nigh she is to the truth, and how much reason she has for her evil forebodings! Then he asked aloud: So, Kate, you believe that Gardiner hates you?

I do not believe it, I know it! said she. He wounds me wherever he can; and though his wounds are made only with pins, that comes only from this, that he is afraid that you might discover it if he drew a dagger on me, whilst you might not notice the pin, with which he secretly wounds me. And what was his coming here to-day, other than a new assault on me? He knows very well—and I have never made a secret of it—that I am an enemy to this Roman Catholic religion, the Pope of which has dared hurl his ban against my lord and husband; and that I seek with lively interest to be instructed as to the doctrine and religion of the so-called Reformers.

They say that you are a heretic, said the King gravely.

Gardiner says that! But if I am so, you are so too, my King; for your belief is mine. If I am so, so too is Cranmer, the noble Archbishop of Canterbury; for he is my spiritual adviser and helper. But Gardiner wishes that I were a heretic, and he wants me likewise to appear so to you. See, my husband, why it was that he laid those eight death-warrants before you awhile ago. There were eight, all heretics, whom you were to condemn—not a single papist among them; and yet I know that the prisons are full of papists, who, in the fanaticism of their persecuted faith, have spoken words just as worthy of punishment, as those unfortunate ones whom you were to-day to send from life to death by a stroke of your pen. Sire, I should have prayed you, just as fervently, just as suppliantly, had they been papists whom you were to sentence to death! But Gardiner wanted a proof of my heresy; and therefore he selected eight heretics, for whom I was to oppose your hard decree.

It is true, said the King thoughtfully; there was not a single papist among them! But tell me, Kate—are you really a heretic, and an adversary of your King?

With a sweet smile she looked deep into his eyes, and humbly crossed her arms over her beautiful breast. Your adversary? whispered she. Are you not my husband and my lord? Was not the woman made to be subject to the man? The man was created after the likeness of God, and the woman after the likeness of the man. So the woman is only

the man's second self; and he must have compassion on her in love; and he must give her of his spirit, and influence her understanding from his understanding. Therefore your duty is to instruct me, my husband; and mine is, to learn of you. And of all the women in the world, to no one is this duty made so easy as to me; for God has been gracious to me and given me as my husband, a King whose prudence, wisdom and learning are the wonder of all the world.*

What a sweet little flatterer you are, Kate, said the King with a smile; and with what a charming voice, you want to conceal the truth from us! The truth is, that you yourself are a very learned little body, who has no need at all to learn anything from others, but who would be well able to instruct others.†

Oh, if it is so as you say, cried Catharine, well, then would I teach the whole world to love my King as I do, and to be subject to him in humility, faithfulness and obedience, as I am.

And as she thus spoke, she threw both her arms about the King's neck and leant her head with a languishing expression upon his breast.

The King kissed her, and pressed her fast to his heart. He thought no longer of the danger that was hovering over Catharine's head; he thought only that he loved her, and that life would be very desolate, very tedious and sad without her.

And now, my husband, said Catharine, gently disengaging herself from him—now, since I have confessed to you and received absolution from you—now let us go down into the garden, so that God's bright sun may shine into our hearts fresh and glad. Come, my husband, your chair is ready; and the bees and the butterflies, the gnats and the flies, have already practiced a hymn, with which they are going to greet you, my husband.

Laughing and jesting, she drew him along to the adjoining room, where the courtiers and the rolling-chair were standing ready; and the King mounted his triumphal car, and allowed himself to be rolled through the carpeted corridors, and down the staircases transformed into broad inclined planes of marble, into the garden.

The air had the freshness of winter, and the warmth of spring. The grass like a diligent weaver was already beginning to weave a carpet over the black level of the square; and already here and there a tiny blossom, curious and bashful, was peeping out and seemed to be smiling in astonishment at its own premature existence. The sun seemed so warm and bright; the heavens were so blue; at the King's side went Catharine, with such rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes. Those eyes were always directed to her husband; and her charming prattle was to the King like the melodious song of birds, and made his heart leap for pleasure and delight. But how? What noise all at once drowned Catharine's sweet prattle? And what was it, that flashed up there at the end

* The Queen's own words, as they have been given by all historical writers. See on this point—Burnet, vol. 1, page 84; Tytler, page 418; Larrey's Histoire d'Angleterre, vol. 2, page 201; Leti, vol. 1, page 154.

† Historical. The King's own words.

of that large alley which the royal pair with their suite had just entered?

It was the noise of soldiers advancing; and shining helmets and coats of mail flashed in the sunlight.

One band of soldiers held the outlet from the alley; another advanced up it in close order. At their head were seen striding along Gardiner and Earl Douglas, and at their side the Lieutenant of the Tower.

The King's countenance assumed a lowering and angry expression, and his cheeks were suffused with crimson. With the quickness of youth he rose from his chair, and raised to his full height, he looked with flaming eyes at the procession.

The Queen seized his hand and pressed it to her breast. Ah, said she in a low whisper, protect me, my husband, for fear already overpowers me again. It is my enemy—it is Gardiner, that comes—and I tremble.

You shall no longer tremble before him, Kate! said the King. Woe to them, that dare make King Henry's consort tremble! I will speak with Gardiner.

And almost roughly pushing aside the Queen, the King, utterly heedless in his violent excitement of the pain of his foot, went in a quick pace to meet the advancing troop.

He ordered them by his gesture to halt, and called Gardiner and Douglas to him. What want you here? And what means this strange array? asked he in a rough tone.

The two courtiers stared at him with looks of amazement, and durst not answer him.

Well? asked the King with ever rising wrath, will you at length tell me, by what right you intrude into my garden with an armed host—specially at the same hour that I am here with my consort? Verily, there is no sufficient excuse for such a gross violation of the reverence which you owe your King and master; and I marvel, my Lord Master of Ceremonies, that you did not seek to prevent this indecorum!

Earl Douglas muttered a few words of apology, which the King did not understand, or did not want to understand.

The duty of a master of ceremonies is to protect his King from every annoyance, and you, Earl Douglas, offer it to me yourself. Perchance you want thereby to show that you are weary of your office. Well then, my Lord, I dismiss you from it, and that your presence may not remind me of this morning's disagreeability, you will leave the Court and London! Farewell, my Lord!

Earl Douglas, turning pale and trembling, staggered a few steps backward, and gazed at the King with looks of amazement. He wanted to speak, but the King, with a commanding wave of the hand, bade him be silent.

And now for you, my Lord Bishop! said the King, and his eyes were turned on Gardiner with an expression so wrathful and contemptuous, that he turned pale and looked down to the ground. What means this strange train, with which the priest of God approaches his royal master

to day? And under what impulse of Christian love are you going to hold to-day a heretic-hunt in the garden of your King?

Sire, said Gardiner, completely beside himself, your Majesty well knows why I come; it was at your Majesty's command, that I with Earl Douglas and the Lieutenant of the Tower came, in order to——

Dare not to speak farther! yelled the King, whom it made raving, that Gardiner would not understand him and comprehend the altered state of the King's mind. How dare you make a pretence of my commands, whilst I, full of just amazement, question you as to the cause of your appearance? That is to say, you want to charge your King with falsehood. You want to excuse yourself by accusing me. Ah, my worthy Lord Bishop, this time you are thwarted in your plan, and I disavow you and your foolish attempt. No! there is nobody here whom you shall arrest; and, by the Holy Mother of God, were your eyes not blind, you would have seen that here, where the King is taking an airing with his consort, there could be no one whom these catchpolls had to look for! The presence of the royal Majesty is like the presence of God; it dispenses happiness and peace about it; and who ever is touched by its glory, is graced and sanctified thereby.

But, your Majesty, screamed Gardiner, whom anger and disappointed hope had made forgetful of all considerations, you wanted me to arrest the Queen; you yourself gave me the order for it; and now when I come to execute your will—now you repudiate me.

The King uttered a yell of rage, and with lifted arm moved some steps towards Gardiner.

But suddenly he felt his arm held back. It was Catharine, who had hurried up to the King. Oh, my husband, said she in a low whisper, whatever he may have done, spare him! Still he is a priest of the Lord; and so let his sacred robe protect him, though perchance his deeds condemn him!

Ah, do you plead for him? cried the King. Really, my poor wife, you suspect not how little ground you have to pity him, and to beg my mercy for him.* But you are right! We will respect his cassock, and think no more of what a haughty and intriguing man is wrapped in it. But beware, priest, that you do not again remind me of that. My wrath would then inevitably strike you; and I should have as little mercy for you, as you say I ought to show to other evil-doers. And inasmuch as you are a priest, be penetrated with a sense of the gravity of your office, and the sacredness of your calling. Your Episcopal See is at Winchester, and I think your duties call you thither. We no longer need you, for the noble Archbishop of Canterbury is coming back to us, and will have to fulfill the duties of his office near us and the Queen. Farewell!

He turned his back on Gardiner and, supported on Catharine's arm, returned to his rolling chair.

Kate, said he, just now a lowering cloud stood in your sky, but thanks

* The King's own words. See Leti, vol. 1, page 182.

to your smile and your innocent face, it has passed harmlessly over. Methinks we still owe you special thanks for this; and we would like to show you that, by some office of love. Is there nothing that would give you special delight, Kate?

Oh yes, said she with fervor. Two great desires burn in my heart.

Then name them, Kate; and by the Mother of God, if it is in the power of a king to fulfill them, I will do it

Catharine seized his hand and pressed it to her heart. Sire, said she, they wanted to have you sign eight death warrants to day. Oh, my husband, make of these eight criminals, eight happy, thankful subjects; teach them to love that King whom they have reviled—teach their children, their wives and mothers to pray for you, whilst you restore life and freedom to these fathers, these sons and husbands; and while you, great and merciful, like Deity, pardon them.

So shall it be! cried the King cheerfully. Our hand shall have today no other work than to rest in yours; and we will spare it from making these eight strokes of the pen. The eight evil-doers are pardoned; and they shall be free this very day.

With an exclamation of rapturous delight, Catharine pressed Henry's hand to her lips, and her face shone with pure happiness.

And your second wish? asked the King.

My second wish, said she with a smile, pleads for the freedom of a poor prisoner—for the freedom of a human heart, Sire.

The King laughed. A human heart? Does that then run about on the street, so that it can be caught and made a prisoner of?

Sire, you have found it, and incarcerated it in your daughter's bosom. You want to put Elizabeth's heart in fetters, and by an unnatural law compel her to renounce her freedom of choice. Only think—to want to bid a woman's heart, before she can love, to enquire first about the genealogical tree, and to look at the coat of arms, before she notices the man!

Oh, women, women, what foolish children you are though! cried the King laughingly. The question is about thrones, and you think about your hearts! But come, Kate, you shall still further explain that to me; and we will not take back our word, for we have given it you from a free and glad heart.

He took the Queen's arm, and, supported on it, walked slowly up the alley with her. The lords and ladies of the Court followed them in silence and at a respectful distance; and no one suspected, that this woman who was stepping along so proud and magnificent, had but just now escaped an imminent peril of her life; that this man, who was leaning on her arm with such devoted tenderness, had but a few hours before resolved on her destruction.*

And whilst they both chatting confidentially together wandered through the avenues, two others with drooping head and pale face left the royal

*All this plot instigated by Gardiner against the Queen is, in minutest details, historically true, and is found substantially the same in all historical works.

castle, which was to be to them henceforth a lost paradise. Sullen spite and raging hate were in their hearts, but yet they were obliged to endure in silence; they were obliged to smile and to seem harmless, in order not to prepare a welcome feast for the malice of the Court. They felt the spiteful looks of all these courtiers, although they passed by them with downcast eyes. They imagined they heard their malicious whispers, their derisive laughter; and it pierced their heart like the stab of a dagger.

At length they had surmounted it—at length the palace lay behind them, and they were at least free to pour out in words the agony that consumed them—free to be able to break out into bitter execrations, into curses and lamentations.

Lost! all is lost! said Earl Douglas to himself in a hollow voice. I am thwarted in all my plans. I have sacrificed to the Church my life, my means, aye, even my daughter, and it has all been in vain. And like a beggar, I now stand on the street forsaken and without comfort; and our holy mother the Church will no longer heed the son who loved her and sacrificed himself for her, since he was unfortunate, and his sacrifice unavailing.

Despair not! said Gardiner solemnly. Clouds gather above us; but they are dispersed again. And after the day of storm, comes again the day of light. Our day also will come, my friend. Now we go hence, our heads strewn with ashes, and bowed at heart; but, believe me, we shall one day come again with shining face and exultant heart; and the flaming sword of godly wrath will glitter in our hands, and a purple robe will enfold us, dyed in the blood of heretics whom we will offer up to the Lord our God as a well pleasing sacrifice. God spares us for a better time; and our banishment, believe me, friend, is but a refuge that God has prepared us for this evil time, which we are approaching.

You speak of an evil time, and nevertheless you hope, your Highness? asked Douglas gloomily.

And nevertheless I hope! said Gardiner with a strange and horrible smile, and bending down closer to Douglas, he whispered: the King has only a few days more to live. He does not suspect how near he is to his death, and nobody has the courage to tell him. But his physician has confided it to me. His vital forces are consumed, and death stands already before his door to throttle him.

And when he is dead, said Earl Douglas shrugging his shoulders, his son Edward will be King, and those heretical Seymours will control the helm of State! Call you that hope, your Highness?

I call it so.

Do you not know that Edward, young as he is, is nevertheless a fanatical adherent of the heretical doctrine, and at the same time a furious opponent of the Church in which alone is salvation?

I know it, but I know also, that Edward is a feeble boy; and there is current in our Church a holy prophecy, which predicts that his reign is only of short duration. God only knows what his death will be, but

the Church has often before seen her enemies die a sudden death. Death has been often before this, the most effective ally of our holy mother, the Church. Believe me then, my son, and hope, for I tell you, Edward's rule will be of brief duration. And after him, *she* will ascend the throne, the noble and devout Mary, the rigid Catholic, who hates heretics as much as Edward loves them. Oh, friend, when Mary ascends the throne, we shall rise from our humiliation, and the dominion will be ours. Then will all England become, as it were, a single great temple, and the fagot piles about the stake are the altars on which we will consume the heretics, and their shrieks of agony are the holy psalms, which we will make them strike up to the honor of God and his Holy Church. Hope for this time, for I tell you it will soon come.

If *you* say so, your Highness, then it will come to pass, said Douglas significantly. I will then hope and wait; I will save myself from evil days in Scotland, and wait for the good.

And I go, as this King by the wrath of God has commanded, to my Episcopal seat. The wrath of God will soon call Henry hence. May his dying hour be full of torment, and may the Holy Father's curse be realized and fulfilled in him! Farewell! We go with palms of peace forced on us; but we will return with the flaming sword, and our hands will be dripping with heretic blood.

They once more shook hands and silently departed, and before evening came on they had both left London.*

A short time after this eventful walk in the garden of Whitehall, the Queen entered the apartments of the Princess Elizabeth, who hastened to meet her with a burst of joy and clasped her wildly in her arms.

Saved! whispered she. The danger is overcome, and again you are the mighty Queen, the adored wife!

And I have you to thank, that I am so, Princess! Without that warrant of arrest, which you brought me, I was lost. Oh, Elizabeth, but what a martyrdom it was! To smile and jest, whilst my heart trembled with dread and horror; to appear innocent and unembarrassed, whilst it seemed to me, as if I heard already the whiz of the axe that was about to strike my neck! Oh, my God, I passed through the agonies and the dread of a whole lifetime in that one hour. My soul has been harrassed till it is wearied to death, and my strength is exhausted. I could weep,

* Gardiner's prophecy was soon fulfilled. A few days after Gardiner had fallen into disgrace' Henry the Eighth died, and his son Edward, yet a minor, ascended the throne. But his rule was of brief duration. After a reign of scarcely six years, he died a youth of the age of sixteen years, and his sister Mary, called the *Catholic*, ascended the throne. Her first act was to release Gardiner, who under Edward's reign had been confined as a prisoner in the Tower, and to appoint him her Minister, and later, to the place of Lord Chancellor. He was one of the most furious persecutors of the Reformers. Once he said at a council in the presence of the bigoted Queen: "These heretics have a soul so black, that it can be washed clean only in their own blood." He it was too, who urged the Queen to such severe and odious measures against the Princess Elizabeth, and caused her to be a second time declared a bastard and unworthy of succeeding to the throne. When Mary died, Gardiner performed, in Westminster Abbey, where she was entombed, the service for the dead, in the presence of her successor, Queen Elizabeth. Gardiner's discourse was an enthusiastic eulogium of the deceased Queen, and he set forth as her special merit, that she had hated the heretics so ardently and had so many of them executed. He closed with an invective against the Protestants, in which he so little spared the young Queen, and spoke of her in such injurious terms, that he was that very day committed to prison.—Leti, vol. I, page 314.

weep continually over this wretched, deceitful world, in which, to wish right and to do good avail nothing; but in which you must dissemble and lie, deceive and disguise yourself, if you do not want to fall a victim to wickedness and mischief. But, ah Elizabeth, even my tears I dare shed only in secret, for a queen has no right to be melancholy. She must seem ever cheerful, ever happy and contented; and only God and the still, silent night know her sighs and her tears.

And you may let me also see them, Queen, said Elizabeth heartily; for you well know you may trust and rely on me.

Catharine kissed her fervently. You have done me a great service to-day, and I have come. said she, to thank you not with sounding words only, but by deeds Elizabeth, your wish will be fulfilled. The King will repeal the law, which was to compel you to give your hand only to a husband of equal birth.

Oh, cried Elizabeth with flashing eyes, then I shall, perhaps, some day be able to make him whom I love, a king.

Catharine smiled. You have a proud and ambitious heart, said she. God has endowed you with extraordinary ability. Cultivate it and seek to increase it; for my prophetic heart tells me, that you are destined to become one day Queen of England.* But who knows whether then you will still wish to elevate him whom you now love, to be your husband. A queen, as you will be, sees with other eyes than those of a young, inexperienced maiden. Perchance I may not have done right in moving the King to alter this law; for I am not acquainted with the man that you love; and who knows whether he is worthy that you should bestow on him your heart, so innocent and pure!

Elizabeth threw both her arms about Catharine neck, and clung tenderly to her. Oh, said she, he would be worthy to be loved even by you, Catharine; for he is the noblest and handsomest cavalier in the whole world; and though he is no king, yet he is a king's brother-in-law, and will some day be a king's uncle.

Catharine felt her heart, as it were, convulsed, and a slight tremor ran through her frame. And am I not to learn his name? asked she.

Yes, I will tell you it now; for now there is no longer danger in knowing it. The name of him whom I love, Queen, is Thomas Seymour.

Catharine uttered a scream and pushed Elizabeth passionately away from her heart. Thomas Seymour? cried she in a menacing tone. What! do you dare love Thomas Seymour?

And why should I not dare? asked the young girl in astonishment. Why should I not give him my heart, since, thanks to your intercession, I am no longer bound to choose a husband of equal birth? Is not Thomas Seymour one of the first of this land? Does not all England look on him with pride and tenderness? Does not every woman to whom he deigns a look, feel herself honored? Does not the King himself smile and feel more pleased at heart, when Thomas Seymour, that young and strong, bold and spirited hero, stands by his side?

* Catharine's own words. See Leti, vol. 1, page 172.

You are right! said Catharine, whose heart every one of these enthusiastic words lacerated like the stab of a dagger,—yes, you are right. He is worthy of being loved by you—and you could hit upon no better choice. It was only the first surprise, that made me see things otherwise than they are. Thomas Seymour is the brother of a queen, why then should he not also be the husband of a royal princess?

With a bashful blush, Elizabeth hid her smiling face in Catharine's bosom. She did not see with what an expression of alarm and agony the Queen observed her; how her lips were convulsively compressed, and her cheeks covered with a death-like pallor.

And he? asked she in a low tone. Does Thomas Seymour love you?

Elizabeth raised her head and looked at the questioner in amazement. How? said she. Is it possible then to love, if you are not loved?

You are right, sighed Catharine. One must be very humble and silly to be able to do that.

My God! how pale you are, Queen! cried Elizabeth, who just now noticed Catharine's pale face. Your features are distorted; your lips tremble. My God! what does this mean?

It is nothing! said Catharine with a smile full of agony. The excitement and alarm of to-day have exhausted my strength. That is all. Besides a new grief threatens us, of which you as yet know nothing. The King is ill. A sudden dizziness seized him, and made him fall almost lifeless at my side. I came to bring you the King's message; now duty calls me to my husband's sick bed. Farewell, Elizabeth.

She waved a good bye to her with her hand, and with hurried step left the room. She summoned up courage to conceal the agonies of her soul and to pass proud and stately through the halls. To the courtiers bowing before her, she would still be the Queen, and no one should suspect what agony was torturing her within like flames of fire. But at last arrived at her boudoir—at last sure of being overheard and observed by no one, she was no longer the Queen, but only the agonizing, passionate woman.

She sank on her knees, and cried with a heart-rending wail of anguish: My God, my God, grant that I may become mad, so that I may no longer know that he has forsaken me.

CHAPTER XV

THE CATASTROPHE.

After days of secret torture and hidden tears, after nights of sobbing anguish and wailing sorrow, Catharine had at last attained to inward peace; she had at last taken a firm and decisive resolution.

The King was sick unto death; and however much she had suffered and endured from him, still he was her husband; and she would not stand by his death-bed as a perjured and deceitful woman; she would not be constrained to cast down her eyes before the failing gaze of the dying King. She would renounce her love—that love, which however had been as pure and chaste as a maiden's prayer—that love, which was as unapproachably distant as the blush of morn, and yet had stood above her so vast and brilliant, and had irradiated the gloomy pathway of her life with celestial light.

She would make the greatest of sacrifices; she would give her lover to another. Elizabeth loved him Catharine would not investigate and thoroughly examine the point, whether Thomas Seymour returned her love, and whether the oath he had taken to her, the Queen, was really nothing more than a fancy of the brain, or a falsehood. No, she did not believe it; she did not believe that Thomas Seymour was capable of treachery, of double dealing. But Elizabeth loved him; and she was young and beautiful, and a great future lay before her. Catharine loved Thomas Seymour strongly enough to not want to deprive him of this future, but gladly to present herself a sacrifice to the happiness of her lover. What was she—the woman matured in grief and suffering—in comparison with this youthful and fresh blossom, Elizabeth? What had she to offer her beloved further than a life of retirement, of love and of quiet happiness? When once the King is dead and sets her free, Edward the Sixth ascends the throne; and Catharine then is nothing more than the forgotten and disregarded widow of a king; while Elizabeth, the King's sister, may perhaps bring a crown as her dower to him whom she loves.

Thomas Seymour was ambitious. Catharine knew that. A day might come, when he would repent of having chosen the widow of a king instead of the heiress to the throne.

Catharine would anticipate that day. She would of her own free will resign her lover to Princess Elizabeth. She had by a struggle brought her heart to this sacrifice; she had pressed her hands firmly on her heart, so as not to hear how it wailed and wept.

She went to Elizabeth, and said to her with a sweet smile: To-day I will bring your lover to you, Princess. The King has fulfilled his promise. He has to-day with his last dying strength signed this act, which gives you liberty to chose your husband, not from the ranks of princes alone, but to follow your own heart in your choice. I will give this act to your lover, and assure him of my assistance and aid. The King is suffering very much to-day, and his consciousness fails more and more. But be certain, if he is in a condition to hear me, I will spend all my powers of persuasion in inclining him to your wish, and in moving him to give his consent to your marriage with Earl Sudley. I now go to receive the Earl. So tarry in your room, Princess, for Seymour will soon come to bring you the act.

Whilst she thus spoke, it seemed to her as though her heart were

pierced by red-hot daggers; as though a two edged sword were cleaving her breast. But Catharine had a strong and courageous soul. She had sworn to herself to endure this torture to the end; and she endured it. No writhing of her lips, no sigh, no outcry, betrayed the pain that she was suffering. And if indeed her cheeks were pale, and her eye dim, they were so because she had spent nights watching by her husband's sick bed, and because she was mourning for the dying King.

She had the heroism to embrace tenderly this young maiden to whom she was just going to present her love as a sacrifice, and to listen with a smile to the enthusiastic words of gratitude, of rapture and expectant happiness, which Elizabeth addressed to her.

With tearless eyes and firm step she returned to her own apartments; and her voice did not at all tremble, as she bade the chamberlain in attendance to summon to her the Master of Horse, Earl Sudley. Only she had a feeling as though her heart was broken and crushed; and quite softly, quite humbly she whispered: I shall die when he is gone. But so long as he is here, I will live; and he shall not have a suspicion of what I suffer!

And while Catharine suffered so dreadfully, Elizabeth was jubilant with delight and rapture; for at last she stood at the goal of her wishes, and this very day she was to become the betrothed of her lover. Oh, my God, how slow and sluggish crept those minutes along! How many eternities had she still to wait before he would come—he, her lover, and soon her husband!

Was he already with the Queen? Could she expect him already? She stood as if spell-bound at the window, and looked down into the court-yard. Through that great gateway over there he must come; through that door yonder he must go, in order to reach the Queen's apartments.

She uttered an exclamation, and a glowing blush flitted across her face. There, there he was. Yonder drew up his equipage; his gold-laced lackeys opened the door and he alighted. How handsome he was, and how magnificent to look upon! How noble and proud his tall figure! How regularly beautiful his fresh, youthful face! How saucy the haughty smile about his mouth; and how his eyes flamed and flashed and shone in wantonness and youthful happiness. His look glanced for a moment at Elizabeth's window. He saluted her, and then entered the door leading to the wing of the palace of Whitehall occupied by the Queen. Elizabeth's heart beat so violently that she felt almost suffocated. Now he must have reached the great staircase—now he was above it—now he was entering the Queen's apartments—he traverses the first, the second, the third chamber. In the fourth, Catharine was waiting for him.

Oh, my God, Elizabeth would have given a year of her life to hear what Catharine would say to him, and what reply he would make to the surprising intelligence; a year of her life to be able to see his rapture, his astonishment and his delight.

He was so handsome when he smiled, so bewitching when his eyes blazed with love and pleasure.

Elizabeth was a young, impulsive child. She had a feeling as if she must suffocate in the agony of expectation; her heart leaped into her mouth; her breath was stifled in her breast. She was so impatient for happiness.

Oh, if he does not come soon I shall die, murmured she. Oh, if I could only at least see him, or only hear him! All at once she stopped; her eyes flashed up, and a bewitching smile flitted across her features. Yes, said she, I will see him, and I will hear him. I can do it, and I will do it. I have the key which the Queen gave me, and which opens the door that separates my rooms from hers. With that key I may reach her bed-chamber, and next to the bed-chamber is her boudoir, in which, without doubt, she will receive the Earl. I will enter quite softly, and hiding myself behind the hanging which separates the bed-chamber from the boudoir, I shall be able to see him, and hear everything that he says!

She laughed out loud and merrily like a child, and sprang for the key, which lay on her writing table. Like a trophy of victory she swung it high above her on her hand and cried: I will see him.

Then light, joyful, and with beaming eye, she left the, room.

She had conjectured rightly. Catharine received the Earl in her boudoir. She sat on the divan standing opposite the door which led into the reception room. That door was open, and so Catharine had a perfect view of the whole of that large space. She could see the Earl as he traversed it. She could once more enjoy, with a rapture painfully sweet, his proud beauty, and let her looks rest on him with love and adoration.

But at length he crossed the threshold of the boudoir; and now there was an end of her happiness, of her sweet dream, and of her hopes and her rapture.

She was nothing more than the Queen, the wife of a dying King; no longer Earl Seymour's beloved, no longer his future and his happiness.

She had the courage to greet him with a smile; and her voice did not tremble, when she bade him shut the door leading into the hall, and drop the hanging.

He did so, gazing at her with looks of surprise. He did not comprehend that she dared give him an interview; for the King was still alive, and even with his tongue faltering in death he might destroy them both.

Why did she not wait till the morrow? On the morrow the King might be already dead; and then they could see each other without constraint, and without danger. Then was she his, and naught could longer stand in the way between them and happiness. Now when the King was near his death—now he loved her only—he loved but Catharine. His ambition had decided his heart. Death had become the judge over Seymour's double affection and divided heart, and with King Henry's death, Elizabeth's star had also paled.

Catharine was the widow of a King; and, without doubt, this tender

husband had appointed his young and adored wife Regent during the minority of the Prince of Wales. Catharine then would have still five years of unlimited sway, of royal authority and sovereign power. If Catharine were his wife, then would he, Thomas Seymour, share this power; and the purple robes of royalty, which rested on her shoulders, would cover him also; and he would help her bear that crown, which doubtless might sometimes press heavily on her tender brow. He would, in reality, be the Regent, and Catharine would be so only in name. She, the Queen of England, and he, King of this Queen. What a proud, intoxicating thought was that! And what plans, what hopes might not be twined with it! Five years of sway—was not that a time long enough to undermine the throne of the royal boy and to sap his authority? Who could conjecture whether the people, once accustomed to the regency of the Queen, might not prefer to remain under her sceptre, instead of committing themselves to this feeble youth? The people must be constrained so to think, and to make Catharine, Thomas Seymour's wife, their reigning Queen.

The King was sick unto death, and Catharine was, without doubt, the Regent—perchance some day the sovereign Queen.

Princess Elizabeth was only a poor Princess, entirely without a prospect of the throne; for before her came Catharine, came Edward, and finally still, Mary, Elizabeth's elder sister. Elizabeth had not the least prospect of the throne; and Catharine, the nearest and best founded.

Thomas Seymour pondered this as he traversed the apartments of the Queen; and when he entered her presence, he had convinced himself that he loved the Queen only, and that it was she alone whom he had always loved.

Elizabeth was forgotten and despised. She had no prospect of the throne—why then should he love her?

The Queen, as we have said, ordered him to shut the door of the boudoir and to drop the hanging. At the same moment that he did this, the hanging of the opposite door, leading into the sleeping apartment, moved—perhaps only the draught of the closing door had done it. Neither the Queen nor Seymour noticed it. They were both too much occupied with themselves. They saw not how the hanging again and again gently shook and trembled. They saw not how it was gently opened a little in the middle; nor did they see the sparkling eyes which suddenly peeped through the opening in the hanging; nor suspected they that it was the Princess Elizabeth, who had stepped behind the curtain, the better to see and hear what was taking place in the boudoir.

The Queen had arisen and advanced a few steps to meet the Earl. As she now stood before him—as their eyes met, she felt her courage sink and her heart fail.

She was compelled to look down at the floor to prevent him from seeing the tears which involuntarily came into her eyes. With a silent salutation she offered him her hand. Thomas Seymour pressed it impulsively to his lips, and looked with passionate tenderness into her

face. She struggled to collect all her strength that her heart might not betray itself. With a hurried movement she withdrew her hand from him, and took from the table a roll of paper containing the new act of succession signed by the King.

My Lord, said she, I have called you hither, because I would like to entrust a commission to you. I beg you to carry this parchment to the Princess Elizabeth, and be pleased to deliver it to her. But before you do that, I will make you acquainted with its contents. This parchment contains a new law relative to the succession, which has already received the sanction of the King. By virtue of this, the royal princesses are no longer under the necessity of uniting themselves with a husband who is a sovereign prince, if they wish to preserve their hereditary claim on the throne unimpaired. The King gives the princesses the right to follow their own hearts; and their claim to the succession is not to suffer thereby, if the husband chosen is neither a king nor a prince. That, my Lord, is the contents of this parchment which you are to carry to the Princess, and without doubt you will thank me for making you the messenger of these glad tidings.

And why, asked he in astonishment—why does your Majesty believe that this intelligence should fill me with special thankfulness?

She collected all her powers; she prayed to her own heart for strength and self-control.

Because the Princess has made me the confidant of her love, and because I am consequently aware of that tender tie which binds you to her! said she gently; and she felt that all the blood had fled from her cheeks!

The Earl looked into her face in mute astonishment. Then his inquiring and searching glance swept all around the room.

We are overheard, then? asked he low in a voice. We are not alone?

We are alone! said Catharine aloud. Nobody can hear us; and God alone is witness of our conversation.

Elizabeth, who stood behind the hanging, felt her cheeks glow with shame, and she began to repent what she had done. But she was nevertheless, as it were, spell-bound to that spot. It was certainly mean and unworthy of a Princess to eavesdrop, but she was at that time but a young girl who loved, and who wanted to observe her lover. So she stayed; she laid her hand on her anxiously throbbing heart, and murmured to herself: What will he say? What means this anxious dread that comes over me?

Well, said Thomas Seymour, in an entirely altered tone, if we are alone then this mask which hides my face, may fall; then the cuirass which binds my heart may be loosened. Hail, Catharine, my star and my hope! No one, you say, hears us, save God alone; and God knows our love, and he knows with what longing, and what ecstacy, I have sighed for this hour—for this hour, which at length again unites me to you. My God, it is an eternity since I have seen you, Catharine; and my heart thirsted for you as a famishing man for a refreshing draught.—

Catharine, my beloved, blessed be you, that you have at last call me to you!

He opened his arms for her, but she repulsed him sharply. You are mistaken in the name, Earl, said she bitterly. You say Catharine, and mean Elizabeth! It is the Princess that you love; to Elizabeth belongs your heart, and she has devoted her heart to you. Oh, Earl, I will favor this love, and be certain, I will not not cease from prayer and supplication, till I have inclined the King to your wishes, till he has given his consent to your marriage with the Princess Elizabeth.

Thomas Seymour laughed. This is a masquerade, Catharine; and you still wear a mask over your beautiful and charming face. Oh, away with that mask, Queen. I want to behold you as you are. I want to see again your own beautiful self; I want to see the woman, who belongs to me, and who has sworn to be mine, and who has, with a thousand sacred oaths, vowed to love me, to be true to me, and to follow me as her husband and her lord. Or how, Catharine? Can you have forgotten your oath? Can you have become untrue to your own heart? Do you want to cast me away, and throw me, like a ball of which you are tired, to another?

Oh, said she quite unconsciously, I—I can never forget and never be untrue.

Well then, my Catharine, thou bride and wife of my future, what then are you speaking to me of Elizabeth?—of this little Princess, who sighs for love as the flower bud for the sun, and takes the first man whom she finds in her way, for the sun after which she pines? What care we for Elizabeth, my Catharine? And what have we to do with that child in this hour of long-wished for reunion?

Oh, he calls me a child! murmured Elizabeth. I am nothing but a child to him! And she pressed her hands on her mouth in order to repress her cry of anger and anguish, and to prevent them from hearing her teeth, which were chattering as though she were in a chill.

With irresistible force, Thomas Seymour drew Catharine into his arms. Avoid me no longer, said he, in tender entreaty. The hour has come, which is finally to determine our destiny! The King is at the point of death, and my Catharine will at length be free—free, to follow her own heart. At this hour, I remind you of your oath! Do you remember still that day, when you referred me to this hour? Do you still know, Catharine, how you vowed to be my wife and to receive me as the lord of your future? Oh, my beloved, that crown, which weighed down your head, will soon be taken away. Now I yet stand before you as your subject, but in a few hours it will be your lord and your husband that stands before you; and he will ask: Catharine, my wife, have you kept with me the faith you swore to me? Have you been guiltless of perjury in respect of your vows and your love? Have you preserved my honor, which is your honor also, clear from every spot; and can you, free from guilt, look me in the eye?

He gazed at her with proud, flashing eyes, and before his command-

ing look, her firmness and her pride melted away like ice before the sunshine. Again he was the master, whose right it was to rule her heart; and she again the lowly hand-maid, whose sweetest happiness it is to submit and bow to the will of her lover.

I can look you frankly in the eye, murmured she, and no guilt burdens my conscience. I have loved naught but you, and God only dwells near you in my heart.

Wholly overcome, wholly intoxicated with happiness, she leant her head upon his shoulder, and as he clasped her in his arms, as he covered with kisses her now unresisting lips, she felt only that she loved him unutterably, and that there was no happiness for her, except with him.

It was a sweet dream, a moment of most exquisite ecstacy. But it was only a moment. A hand was laid violently on her shoulder, a hoarse angry voice called her name; and as she looked up, she encountered the wild glance of Elizabeth, who stood before her with deathly pale cheeks, with trembling lips, with expanded nostrils, and eyes darting flashes of wrath and hatred.

This, then, is the friendly service which you swore to me? said she gnashing her teeth. Did you steal into my confidence, and with scoffing mouth spy out the secrets of my heart, in order to go away and betray them to your paramour? That you might in his arms ridicule this pitiable maiden, who allowed herself for the moment to be betrayed by her heart, and took a felon for an honorable man. Woe, woe to you, Catharine, for I tell you, I will have no compassion on the adulteress, who mocks at me, and betrays my father!

She was raving, completely beside herself with anger, she dashed away the hand which Catharine laid on her shoulder, and sprang back from the touch of her enemy, like an irritated lioness.

Her father's blood fumed and raged within her, and, a true daughter of Henry the Eighth, she concealed in her heart only blood thirsty and revengeful thoughts.

She cast on Thomas Seymour a look of dark wrath, and a contemptuous smile played about her lips. My Lord, said she, you have called me a child who allows herself to be easily deceived, because she longs so much for the sun and for happiness. You are right; I was a child; and I was foolish enough to take a miserable liar for a nobleman, who was worthy of the proud fortune of being loved by a King's daughter. Yes, you are right; that was a childish dream. Thanks to you, I have now awoke from it; and you have matured the child into a woman, who laughs at the folly of her youth, and despises to-day what she adored yesterday. I have nothing to do with you; and you are even too insignificant, and too contemptible, for my anger. But I tell you, you have played a hazardous game, and you will lose. You courted a Queen and a Princess, and you will gain neither of them; not the one, for she despises you; not the other, for she ascends the scaffold!

With a wild laugh she was hurrying to the door, but Catharine with

a strong hand held her back, and compelled her to remain. What are you going to do? asked she with perfect calmness and composure.

What am I going to do? asked Elizabeth, her eyes flashing like those of a lioness. You ask me, what I will do? I will go to my father, and tell him what I have here witnessed! He will listen to me; and his tongue will still have strength enough to pronounce your sentence of death! Oh, my mother died on the scaffold, and yet she was innocent. We will see forsooth, whether you will escape the scaffold—you, who are guilty!

Well then, go to your father, said Catharine; go and accuse me. But first you shall hear me. This man, whom I loved, I wanted to renounce, in order to give him to you. By the confession of your love, you had crushed my happiness and my future. But I was not angry with you. I understood your heart, for Thomas Seymour is worthy of being loved. But you are right; for the King's wife, it was a sinful love, however innocent and pure I may have been. On that account I wanted to renounce it; on that account I wanted, on the first confession from you, to silently sacrifice myself. You yourself have now made it an impossibility. Go, then, and accuse us to your father; and fear not that I will belie my heart. Now, that the crisis has come, it shall find me prepared; and on the scaffold I will still account myself blest, for Thomas Seymour loves me!

Aye, he loves you, Catharine! cried he completely overcome and enchanted by her noble, majestic bearing. He loves you so warmly and ardently, that death with you seems to him an enviable lot; and he would not exchange it for any throne, nor for any crown.

And as he thus spoke, he put his arms round Catharine's neck, and impetuously drew her to his heart.

Elizabeth uttered a fierce scream, and sprang to the door. But what noise was that which all at once drew nigh; which suddenly, like a wild billow, came roaring on, and filled the ante-rooms and the halls? What were these affrighted, shrieking voices calling? What were they screaming to the Queen, and the physicians, and the priest?

Elizabeth stopped in her race, and listened. Thomas Seymour and Catharine, arm linked in arm, stood near her. They scarcely heard what was taking place; they looked at each other and smiled, and dreamed of love and death and an eternity of happiness.

Now the door flew open; there was seen John Heywood's pale face; there were the Maids of Honor and the Court officials. And all shrieked and all wailed: The King is dying! He is struck with apoplexy! The King is at the point of death!

The King calls you! The King desires to die in the arms of his wife! said John Heywood, and, as he quietly pushed aside and away from the door Elizabeth, who was pressing violently forwards, he added: The King will see nobody but the priest, and his wife; and he has authorized me to call the Queen!

He opened the door; and through the lines of weeping and wailing

Court-officials and servants, Catharine moved on, to go to the death-bed of her royal husband.

CHAPTER XVI.

LE ROI EST MORT, VIVE LA REINE!

King Henry lay a dying. That life full of sin, full of blood and crime, full of treachery and cunning, full of hypocrisy and sanctimonious cruelty—that life was at last lived out. That hand, which had signed so many death-warrants, was now clutched in the throes of death. It had stiffened at the very moment when the King was going to sign the Duke of Norfolk's death-warrant.* And the King was dying with the gnawing consciousness, that he had no longer the power to throttle that enemy whom he hated The mighty King was now nothing more than a feeble, dying old man, who was no longer able to hold the pen, and sign this death warrant, for which he had so long hankered and hoped. Now it lay before him, and he no longer had the power to use it. God, in His wisdom and His justice, had decreed against him the most grievous and horrible of punishments; He had left him his consciousness; He had not crippled him in mind, but in body only. And that motionless and rigid mass, which growing chill in death lay there on the couch of purple, trimmed with gold—that was the King—a King, whom agony of conscience did not permit to die, and who now shuddered and was horrified in view of death, to which he had, with relentless cruelty, hunted so many of his subjects.

Catharine and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the noble Cranmer, stood at his bed-side; and whilst in convulsive agony he grasped Catharine's hands, he listened to the devout prayers which Cranmer was saying over him.

Once he asked with mumbling tongue: "My Lord, what kind of a world then is that, where those who condemn others to die, are condemned to die themselves?"† And as the pious Cranmer, touched by the agonies and tortures of conscience which he read in the King's looks, and full of pity for the dying tyrant, sought to comfort him, and spoke to him of the mercy of God which has compassion on every sinner, the King groaned out: "No, no! No mercy for him who knew no mercy!"

At length this awful struggle of death with life was ended; and death had vanquished life. The King had closed his eyes to earth, to open them again there above, as a guilt-laden sinner in the presence of God.

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* Historical. † The King's own words. Leti, vol. 1, page 16.

For three days his death was kept a secret. They wanted first to have everything arranged, and to fill up the void which his death must make. They wanted, when they spoke to the people of the dead King, to show them also at the same time the living King. And since they knew that the people would not weep for the dead, they were to rejoice for the living; since they would sing no funeral psalms, they were to let their hymns of joy resound.

On the third day, the gates of Whitehall were thrown open; and a gloomy funeral train moved through the streets of London. In dead silence the populace saw borne past them the coffin of the King, before whom they had trembled so much, and for whom they now had not a word of mourning, or of pity—no tears for the dead, who for seven and thirty years had been their King.

They were bearing the coffin to Westminster Abbey to the splendid monument which Wolsey had built there for his royal master. But the way was long, and the panting horses with black housings, which drew the hearse, had often to stop and rest. And all of a sudden, as the carriage stood still on one of the large open squares, blood was seen to issue from the King's coffin. It streamed down in crimson currents and flowed over the stones of the street. The people with a shudder stood around and saw the King's blood flowing, and thought how much blood he had spilt on that same spot; for the coffin was standing on the square where the executions were wont to take place, and where the scaffolds were erected and the stakes set.

As the people stood gazing at the blood which flowed from the King's coffin, two dogs sprang forth from the crowd and, with greedy tongue, licked the blood of King Henry the Eighth. But the people shuddering and horror stricken fled in all directions, and talked among themselves of the poor priest who a few weeks before was executed here on this very spot, because he would not recognize the King as the supreme Lord of the Church, and God's vicegerent; of that unfortunate man, who cursed the King and on the scaffold said: "May the dogs one day drink the blood of this King, who has shed so much innocent blood." And now the curse of the dying man had found its fulfillment, and the dogs had drunk the King's blood.*

When the gloomy funeral train had left the palace of Whitehall, when the King's corpse no longer infected the halls with its awful stench of corruption, and the Court was preparing to do homage to the boy Edward as the new King, Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley, entered the room of the young royal widow. He came in a magnificent mourning suit, and his elder brother, Edward Seymour and Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, walked by his side.

With a blush and a sweet smile, Catharine bade them welcome.

Queen, said Thomas Seymour with solemn air, I come to-day, to claim of you a fulfillment of your vow! Oh, do not cast down your eyes, nor blush for shame. The noble Archbishop knows your heart, and he

* Historical. See Tytler, page 481.

knows, that it is as pure as the heart of a maiden, and that an unchaste thought has never sullied your pure soul. And my brother would not be here, had he not faith in, and respect for, a love which has preserved itself so faithful and constant amidst storms and dangers. I have selected these two noble friends as my suitors, and in their presence I will ask you: Queen Catharine, the King is dead, and no fetters longer bind your heart; will you now give it me as my own? Will you accept me as your husband, and sacrifice for me your royal title and your exalted position?

With a bewitching smile, she gave him her hand. You well know, whispered she, that I sacrifice nothing for you, but receive from you all of happiness and love that I hope for.

Will you then, in the presence of these two friends, accept me as your future husband, and plight me your vow of truth and love?

Catharine trembled and cast down her eyes with the bashfulness of a young girl. My God, whispered she, do you not then see my mourning dress? Is it becoming to think of happiness, while the funeral lamentations have scarcely died away?

Queen Catharine, said Archbishop Cranmer, "Let the dead bury their dead!" Life also has its rights; and man should not give up his claim on happiness, for it is a most holy possession. You have endured much and suffered much, Queen, but your heart is pure and without guilt; therefore, you may now, with a clear conscience, bid welcome to happiness also. Do not delay about it. In God's name I have come to bless your love, and give to your happiness a holy consecration.

And I, said Edward Seymour, I have begged of my brother the honor of being allowed to accompany him, in order to say to your Majesty, that I know how to duly appreciate the high honor which you show our family, and that, as your brother-in-law, I shall ever be mindful that you were once my Queen, and I your subject.

But I, cried Thomas Seymour, I would not delay coming to you, in order that I might show you that love only brings me to you, and that no other consideration could induce me. The King's will is not yet opened, and I know not its contents. But however it may determine with respect to all of us, it cannot diminish or increase my happiness in possessing you. Whatever you may be, you will ever be to me only the adored woman, the ardently loved wife; and only to assure you of this, I have come this very day.

Catharine extended her hand to him with a bewitching smile. I have never doubted of you, Seymour, whispered she, and never did I love you more ardently, than when I wanted to renounce you.

She bowed her head on her lover's shoulder, and tears of purest joy bedewed her cheeks. The Archbishop of Canterbury joined their hands, and blessed them as betrothed lovers; and the elder Seymour, Earl Hertford, bowed and greeted them as a betrothed couple.

On that very same day the King's will was opened. In the large gilded hall, in which King Henry's merry laughter and thundering voice

of wrath had so often resounded, were now read his last commands. The whole Court was assembled, as it was wont to be for a joyous festival; and Catharine once more sat on the royal throne. But the dreaded tyrant, the blood-thirsty King, Henry the Eighth, was no longer at her side; but the poor pale boy, Edward, who had inherited from his father neither energy nor genius, but only his thirst for blood and his canting hypocricy. At his side stood his sisters, the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth. Both were pale and of a sad countenance; but with both, it was not for their father that they were grieving.

Mary, the bigoted Roman Catholic, saw with horror and bitter anguish the days of adversity which were about to befall her Church; for Edward was a fanatical opponent of the Roman Catholic religion, and she knew that he would shed the blood of the papists with relentless cruelty. On this account it was, that she mourned.

But Elizabeth, that young girl of ardent heart—she thought neither of her father, nor of the dangers threatening the Church; she thought only of her love, she felt only that she had been deprived of a hope, of an illusion—that she had awoke from a sweet and enchanting dream to the rude and barren reality. She had given up her first love, but her heart bled and the wound still smarted.

The Will was read. Elizabeth looked towards Thomas Seymour during this solemn and portentous reading. She wanted to read in his countenance the impression made on him by these grave words, so pregnant with the future; she wanted to search the depths of his soul, and to penetrate the secret thoughts of his heart. She saw how he turned pale, when, not Queen Catharine, but his brother, Earl Hertford, was appointed Regent during Edward's minority; she saw the sinister, almost angry look, which he threw at the Queen; and with a cruel smile she murmured: "I am revenged! He loves her no longer!"

John Heywood, who was standing behind the Queen's throne, had also observed that look of Thomas Seymour, yet not like Elizabeth with a rejoicing, but with a sorrowful heart, and he dropped his head upon his breast and murmured: "Poor Catharine! He will hate her, and she will be very unhappy."

But she was still happy. Her eye beamed with pure delight, when she perceived that her lover was, by the King's will, appointed High-Admiral of England, and guardian of the young King. She thought not of herself, but only of him, of her lover; and it filled her with the proudest satisfaction to see him invested with places of such high honor and dignity.

Poor Catharine! Her eye did not see the sullen cloud which still rested on the brow of her beloved. She was so happy and so innocent and so little ambitious. For her this only was happiness, to be her lover's, to be the wife of Thomas Seymour.

And this happiness was to be hers. Thirty days after the death of King Henry the Eighth, she became the wife of the High Admiral, Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley. Archbishop Cranmer solemnized

their union in the chapel at Whitehall, and the Lord Protector, now Duke of Sommersett, formerly Earl of Hertford, the brother of Thomas Seymour, was the witness of this marriage, which was, however, still kept a secret, and of which there was to be no other witnesses. When, however, they resorted to the chapel for the marriage, Princess Elizabeth came forward to meet the Queen, and offered her hand.

It was the first time that they had met since the dreadful day on which they confronted each other as enemies—the first time that they had again seen each other eye to eye.

Elizabeth had wrung this sacrifice from her heart. Her proud soul revolted at the thought that Thomas Seymour might imagine that she was still grieving for him, that she still loved him. She would show him that her heart was entirely recovered from that first dream of her youth—that she had not the least regret or pain.

She accosted him with a haughty, cold smile, and presented Catharine her hand. Queen, said she, you have so long been a kind and faithful mother to me, that I may well once more claim the right of being your daughter. Let me, therefore, as your daughter, be present at the solemn transaction in which you are about to engage; and allow me to stand at your side and pray for you, whilst the Archbishop performs the sacred service, and transform the Queen into the Countess of Sudley. May God bless you, Catharine, and give you all the happiness that you deserve!

And Princess Elizabeth knelt at Catharine's side, as the Archbishop blessed this new marriage tie. And while she prayed, her eye again glided over towards Thomas Seymour, who was standing there by his young wife. Catharine's countenance beamed with beauty and happiness, but upon Thomas Seymour's brow still lay the cloud that had settled there on that day when the King's Will was opened—that Will which did *not* make Queen Catharine Regent, and which thereby destroyed Thomas Seymour's proud and ambitious schemes.

And that cloud remained on Thomas Seymour's brow. It sunk down lower, and still lower. It soon overshadowed the happiness of Catharine's love, and awakened her from short her dream of bliss.

What she suffered, how much of secret agony and silent woe she endured, who can wish to know or conjecture? Catharine had a proud and a chaste soul. She concealed from the world her pain and her grief, as bashfully as she had once done her love. Nobody suspected what she suffered and how she struggled with her crushed heart.

She never complained; she saw bloom after bloom fall from her life; she saw the smile disappear from her husband's countenance; she heard his voice, at first so tender, gradually harden to harsher tones; she felt his heart growing colder and colder, and his love changing into indifference, perhaps even into hate.

She had devoted her whole heart to love, but she felt day by day, and hour by hour, that her husband's heart was cooling more and more. She felt with dreadful, heart-rending certainty: She was his with all her love. But he was no longer hers.

And she tormented her heart to find out why he no longer loved her; what she had been guilty of, that he turned away from her. Seymour had not the delicacy and magnanimity to conceal from her his inward thoughts; and at last she comprehended why he neglected her.

He had hoped, that Catharine would be Regent of England, that he then would be consort of *the Regent.* Because it had not happened so, his love had died.

Catharine felt this, and she died of it.

But not suddenly, not at once, did death release her from her sorrows and racking tortures.

Six months she had to suffer and struggle with them. After six months, she died.

Strange rumors were spread at her death; and John Heywood never passed by Earl Seymour without gazing at him with an agry look, and saying: You have murdered the beautiful Queen! Deny it, if you can!

Thomas Seymour laughed, and did not consider it worth his while to defend himself against the accusations of the fool.

He laughed, notwithstanding he had not yet put off the mourning he wore for Catharine.

In these mourning garments he ventured to approach the Princess Elizabeth, to swear to her his ardent love, and sue for her hand.

But Elizabeth repelled him with coldness and haughty contempt; and, like the fool, the Princess also said: you have murdered Catharine! I cannot be the wife of a murderer!

And God's justice punished the murderer of the innocent and noble Catharine; and scarcely three months after the death of his wife, the High-Admiral had to ascend the scaffold, and was executed as a traitor.

By Catharine's wish, her books and papers were given to her true friend John Heywood; and he undertook with the greatest care an examination of the same. He found among her papers many leaves written by herself, many verses and poems, which breathed forth the sorrowfulness of her spirit. Catharine herself had collected them into a book, and with her own hand she had given to the book this title: "*Lamentations of a Sinner.*"

Catharine had wept much as she penned these "Lamentations;" for in many places the manuscript was illegible, and her tears had obliterat the characters.

John Heywood kissed the spots where the traces of her tears remained, and whispered: The sinner has by her suffering been glorified into a saint; and these poems are the cross and the monument, which she has prepared for her own grave. I will set up this cross, that the good may take comfort, and the wicked flee from it. And he did so. He had the Lamentations of a Sinner printed; and this book was the fairest monument of Catharine.

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THREE MONTHS IN THE SOUTHERN STATES —By Lieut. Col. Fremantle.

WAR IN NICARAGUA.